

**ACTS OF REFERENCE:
AN ESSAY ON THE RATIONAL POWERS OF PROPER NAMES**

by

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ABSTRACT

The dissertation deals with a cluster of questions surrounding singular reference and singular content. My particular topic is proper names, which I treat as a case study throughout. I maintain that for any approach to pass muster, it cannot be incompatible with descriptions of competent linguistic behavior as itself a form of rational action. In familiar terms, speech is something we *do*, rather than something that merely *happens* to us. Human linguistic communication is, as such, quite fundamentally a species of intentional action. Making sense of an action, whether in the linguistic case or generally, crucially involves recognizing the agent's own perspective in so acting. We cannot then be content with a conception of language at odds with the rationality internal to the phenomenon of human language use.

In the first chapter I develop a critique of a currently orthodox conception of semantic content—so-called “Millianism” or “Direct Reference Semantics”—in Scott Soames' most explicit and developed version of it. I demonstrate that Direct Reference fails irremediably by making the rational or intentional aspect of language use posterior to its “propositionalist” approach to semantic content. The attempt to preserve linguistic rationality non-semantically, as direct reference must, leads to a kind of psychologism about meaning. The larger implication is that in order to do justice to the rationality of speech, of which Frege's puzzle is one historically important benchmark, we need a conception of content controlled by the notion of rationality itself.

The topic of the second chapter, the fixation of reference, continues the theme of the rationality of reference. Against the background dialectic of competing descriptivist and causalist accounts, I introduce Gareth Evans' fertile notion of a proper-name-using practice as presenting a potential third way. The two primary goals of this chapter are, first, applying Evans' mature apparatus to yield an account of the vexed question of “Madagascar's” inadvertent shift in reference; and, second, an account of the determination of reference in terms of the rational basis of information anchoring a practice.

This sets the stage for the third chapter, where I develop and defend a notion of de re sense originating in the work of John McDowell and Gareth Evans. The basic idea is that we can accommodate Frege's aim of according distinct senses to certain pairs of co-referring terms, while characterizing their contents in fundamentally non-descriptive ways and tying them essentially to their reference. It thus combines the merits of what motivate proponents of direct reference with the ease with which it was thought descriptivism could handle Frege's puzzle, while avoiding the characteristic pitfalls of both. My main contention in this chapter is that we can achieve this desirable end by recognizing the *rational powers* constitutive of competence with a proper name as an element in a public language. In the remainder of the chapter I pursue various applications, including semantic

individuation, reference relations, and partially descriptive names. The chapter comes to a close in comparing this account to another one of its current crop of competitors, viz. meta-linguistic descriptivism.

Having eschewed a position for descriptive content in the content of a proper name, in the fourth chapter I consider the possibility of descriptive reference-fixing and its implications for the expressions formed thereby, viz. descriptive names. I part ways with Evans to some extent here in countenancing the possibility that a descriptive name could get by without a descriptive content. I argue nevertheless that the epistemic peculiarities thwart any prospect of a complete cognitive assimilation with the class of proper names. I conclude by suggesting the bearing of these points on the Kripkean contingent *a priori* and the status of singular negative existentials.

The final chapter promises a resolution of Frege's puzzle in terms of *de re* sense, which I approach from two angles. From the first, I stress the centrality of the utterance in specifying the content of attributions, and point out its advantages over its sententialist and propositionalist rivals. Toward this end, I defend Davidson's paratactic proposal, and bring out its harmony with the notion of sense on offer. This generates two types of truth-conditions, which proves to be an indispensable principle in the ascription of singular content. I end by applying these principles to Kripke's puzzle.

Names are magic—One word can pour such a flood through the soul.

Walt Whitman

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THE DOCTRINE OF DIRECT REFERENCE

What is the curious rapport of names?

Walt Whitman¹

1. Introduction

The primary task of this chapter is to query a currently orthodox conception of semantic content—"Millianism" or "Direct Reference Semantics"—in Scott Soames' most explicit and developed version of it. I argue that Millianism fails irremediably by making the rational or intentional aspect of language use posterior to its account of semantic content. In what follows, then, my strategy is to lay bare the incompatibility between the doctrine of Direct Reference and unavoidable facts about the rationality of language use. If my arguments are correct, a major upshot is that an adequate account of singular reference and singular content should countenance a semantic difference between certain pairs co-referring expressions, and deny on those grounds that such terms are capable of inter-substitution in all contexts without change in meaning or truth.

2. A Brief Sketch of Direct Reference Semantics²

In broad terms, Direct Reference or Millianism is the view that the semantic content of any meaningful expression of a language is nothing other than its reference. Beginning with the various species of singular terms—proper names, demonstratives, and indexicals—its adherents identify their semantic contents with their referents. For example, the meaning of "Bertrand Russell" is Bertrand Russell, that is, the man himself—the object referred to by this name. Further, the semantic contents of predicative expressions (including words for relations and functions which are not, unlike singular terms, standardly treated as referring expressions) just are their corresponding properties, relations, or functions. The movement is toward a general semantic framework of 'Russellian propositions': ordered n-tuples of objects, plus whichever properties, relations, or functions of n-place correspond to the expressions in the sentence. Consider the atomic sentence, "Bertrand Russell bikes." Its semantic content is the ordered pair consisting of Russell and the property of biking: <Russell, bikes>.³

¹ Whitman (1904), p.469

² With the exception noted in n.5, these principles apply to all proponents of Direct Reference. See especially Soames (2002) and Salmon (1991). The label "direct reference semantics" comes from Kaplan (1977/1989) who characterizes the relation as one of being "en rapport" with the object of reference.

³ The ordered pair conception of content courts concerns over the 'unity of the proposition.' Nothing I say here will turn on that problem or its resolution. For Soames' stab at a solution, see his (2002), Ch. 2. For an excellent account of the pivotal role it played in the origins and development of analytic philosophy, see Hylton (1993).

This ‘propositionalist’ framework is then tied to a global principal of substitution that permits the inter-substitution of one directly referring expression for another directly co-referring one—in all contexts, including intensional ones—without any resulting change in the meaning, and therefore truth value, of the sentence. For example, sentences (1) and (2) each have the semantic content, represented by the ordered pair (3), and truth value as each other.

- (1) Hesperus is visible.
- (2) Phosphorus is visible.
- (3) <Venus, visibility>

Combining this principle with a construal of propositional attitudes as relations between agents and Russellian propositions leads to a kindred result. Soames treats belief and other propositional attitudes as a two-place relation between agents and Russellian propositions.⁴ The semantic form of such sentences mirrors this claim by representing the subject of the attitude as standing in a certain relation, depending on the attitude in question, to the content of the sentence’s embedded clause. Schematically, a sentence of the form “a believes that p,” relative to a particular context c, is <<s, Prop p>, B>, where B is the belief relation, s is the content of “a,” and Prop p is the Russellian proposition expressed by “p,” relative to its context. A belief-sentence such as (4) will be semantically identical to (5), each bearing the same semantic and logical form represented by (6), across all contexts.

- (4) Hannah believes that Hesperus is visible.
- (5) Hannah believes that Phosphorus is visible.
- (6) <<h, Prop 3,> B>

In other words, “Hesperus” and “Phosphorus” can be freely exchanged for each other in any of these sentences without change in meaning or truth. A crucial consequence of this is that whenever a sentence like (4) or (5) is true, the corresponding sentence must also be true.

3. Frege’s Puzzle

Frege originally proposed a puzzle about the cognitive value (*Erkenntniswert*) of certain identity sentences.⁵ Putting the puzzle in terms that are neutral to Soames,⁶

⁴ For Salmon, the subject stands in a three-place relation toward a Russellian proposition and a “guise”. And for Richard, there is a three-place between subject, Russellian proposition, and a ‘Russellian annotated matrix’ (RAM). As Salmon (1998), cashes out his notion of guise in terms that amount to descriptive content, he reaches a position relevantly similar to Soames’. Richard’s (1990) notion of a RAM, however, involves relations between a sentence-constituent and a representation in Fodor’s (1980) hypothetical Language of Thought, and so is not a target of my discussion below. It is, however, vulnerable to other criticisms based on considerations of intentional explanation. See Taschek (1998, pp. 339-340 n.21) for a number of such criticisms.

⁵ Frege (1892)

we can pose Frege's question in the following form. How can a speaker who is competent to understand an identity sentence like "Hesperus is Phosphorus" not, in understanding it, already know that the sentence is true? The sentence "Hesperus is Phosphorus" expresses a true identity about an object, two of whose names the subject is competent to understand in this context and countless others. Moreover, both "Hesperus and Hesperus" and "Phosphorus is Phosphorus" express the same identity, whose truth the speaker could easily recognize if confronted with these sentences. How, then, could she understand a sentence expressing this very identity, and yet be uncertain of its truth? How might she be understanding this sentence differently in such cases?

A slight variation on this original formulation, which will be the focus of the discussion here, is put not principally in terms of understanding the sentence while not necessarily knowing that it is true. Instead, the alternative scenario is one in which a speaker who is competent with the two names adopts rationally conflicting attitudes (say, belief and disbelief) toward the contents of utterances of two sentences that differ solely in the substitution of one co-referring expression for another, simultaneously endorsing one speech act and rejecting the other.

Once the conflicting attitudes toward the two sentences the speaker understands are made explicit, the chief challenge of Frege's puzzle is to specify plausible contents of the speaker's attitudes. This is pursued by asking what the speaker could have meant in intentionally uttering these conflicting sentences. Suppose, for example, that a speaker accepts (1), and would use it to express her belief to that effect, but rejects (2), and would use it to express her disbelief or denial to that effect, relative to contexts of use suitable for utterances of each to express contents to these effects. How are we to make sense of what the speaker said? Intimately related to this question, how should we report the contents of the attitudes the speaker gave expression to by means of these speech acts?

Now, there are certain considerations and constraints which should foreground all adequate treatments Frege's puzzle, but which are not always made explicit. A fairly obvious one is that the subject make her conflicting assertions sincerely and literally, that is, non-figuratively, without irony, metaphor, and the like. If a speaker asserts two conflicting sentences that would otherwise give rise to a Frege case, but she's speaking sarcastically or metaphorically (say), then recognition of that is sufficient to prevent puzzlement over the point of her assertions.

A more substantive feature of Frege's puzzle is that the subject be a competent speaker of the language, who understands both terms, and the sentences that contain them. If she were not a competent speaker of the language, or did not understand the relevant terms, then that alone would typically be sufficient reason

⁶ Given Soames' claim elsewhere (1989) that semantic competence, or linguistic understanding, does not require knowledge of meaning, I have here rephrased the question without assuming any role for the speaker's semantic knowledge.

to resist making the natural attitude attribution above. Despite understanding both terms, a further feature of all Frege cases is that the subject nonetheless fails to realize that they co-refer. Understanding two co-referring terms does not entail knowing that they co-refer. What's more, if the speaker understood the sentences and had such knowledge, it would be a mystery why she would take conflicting attitudes toward them. So in the one case, where the subject's competence is deficient, she knows too little for the puzzle to arise. In the other, where she both understands the relevant terms and knows that they co-refer, she knows too much for the puzzle to arise.

At this point, it might seem that we have assembled enough materials to address the Frege cases. The speaker understands "Hesperus is Phosphorus" but does not thereby know that the sentence is true, and she adopts conflicting attitudes toward (1) and (2), simply because she does not know that the two names denote the same object. However, the observation that the subject fails to know that the two terms co-refer does not at all tell us what she did in uttering the sentences containing them. The speaker's ignorance of co-reference does not disclose what she could have understood by the identity sentence, such that her understanding could remain insufficient for the knowledge that the sentence is true. That is to say, the speaker understands "Hesperus is Phosphorus" as saying that Hesperus is Phosphorus, and she understands "Hesperus is Hesperus" as saying that Hesperus is Hesperus. And because she does not know that they co-refer, she can automatically know the truth of one but not the other. But given her understanding of both, we are not yet in a position to decide how the contents of each instance of understanding affects this difference in epistemic status. In the same way, it does not reveal what attitudes she meant to express, and what their contents are. So the core of the puzzle—making sense of the speaker's utterances—remains.

In addition to the speaker's competence, and ignorance of co-reference, a third feature of Frege cases is that the speaker be minimally rational. For my purposes here all this amounts to this. When speaking sincerely and literally, a competent speaker will not intentionally utter absurdities, such as contradictions. For example, she will not openly and knowingly assert a contradiction such as "Phosphorus is visible and Phosphorus is not visible" in order to express a contradictory belief. Further, when she assertorically utters an inconsistent sentence, such as "Hesperus is visible, but Phosphorus is not," she will typically intend to express something other than a belief that a particular object, Venus, both has and does not have the same property, visibility, at the same time. This is not to say that rationality requires that a subject have no inconsistent attitudes. For in that case, no human being would be rational. The point is just that a rational speaker generally does not simultaneously assert them both, with the knowledge that they are inconsistent. When a rational, competent subject, speaking sincerely and non-figuratively, does appear to assert such an absurd belief, with the knowledge that it is absurd, that will usually be sufficient reason to look for another interpretation of her speech acts. By the same token, when a semantic theory can do no better than attribute such absurdities to a speaker, again given her knowledge of its absurdity, that is usually a

sufficient reason to doubt that semantic theory, and prefer one that avoids this consequence, all things being equal.

There is another relevant sense of rationality, which is not completely unrelated to the minimal role of rationality just described. When an agent acts intentionally, her actions are intentional or rational under certain descriptions but not others. That is, she acts for reasons. To take the most jejune example, if I believe that it is raining and wish not to get wet, then I'll open an umbrella. The act of opening the umbrella is explained in terms of my reasons for it—in this case my belief that it's raining together with my wish not to get wet. In the case of specifically linguistic actions, an intentional utterance should be susceptible to the same kind of treatment. For example, I might utter, "The door is unlocked" because I believe that the door is unlocked, that an assertion of that sentence means that the door is unlocked, and want my audience to open the door upon understanding me, etc. These reasons that make intentional actions, including linguistic actions, intelligible, need not be consciously premeditated by the agent prior to the action, though they certainly will be some of the time. The point is, rather, that actions are rational or intentional in the light of certain descriptions, which give the agent's reasons for acting from her point of view, and not typically intentional under descriptions that fail to capture that. For example, an essentially non-rational explanation of my saying "The door is unlocked" would be that my vocal cords moved in certain way that allowed me to produce a certain string of sounds. Such a description could not qualify as an intentional or rational explanation of my assertion. Those that do so qualify illuminate the action from the agent's point of view, and an account of the movement of my vocal cords is simply not the right kind of explanation.⁷

Even descriptions that are of the right kind for explanations of intentional actions may very well fail to be a description under which the action is rational. If someone were to explain my utterance above in terms of my belief that pink elephants await me outside, combined with my desire to greet them, they would not have given a description of my speech act which brought its point into view. In sum, when a rational, competent speaker sincerely, non-figuratively, and intentionally expresses conflicting attitudes toward sentences that, unbeknownst to the speaker, differ only in the substitution of one co-referring term for another, we want a description of the subject's speech acts that makes her utterances intelligible. That is the broad benchmark of a solution to Frege's puzzle. An account of the speaker's utterances, in Frege cases, that can do no more than describe those utterances as an expression of an contradictory belief will almost always not be a description under which those utterances are intentional. They will not tell us why the speaker made the assertions she did.

⁷ In this sense, an agent can be irrational in a variety of ways—say, by acting out of wishful thinking—though the resulting action is susceptible nonetheless to rational explanation in the sense that it is explicable in terms of certain intentional states of the agent. For elaboration, see Davidson (1982).

In connection with this, one last constraint is that the content of the thoughts or propositions that the speaker intends to express by uttering the two sentences must differ. Why must they differ? Suppose the pair of sentences expressed the same thought of the speaker's. Then the thought they express would merely amount to the inconsistent assertion and belief that the same object both did and did not have the same property. Such an attribution, as I stressed, will not do justice to the rationality of communication. This point is central to Frege's views, and he combined it with an equally central claim. Namely, the difference between the two thoughts must be traced to the difference in the meanings of the two co-referring terms. Most, if not all, responses to Frege's puzzle acknowledge the need for honoring the first point, though many do so while rejecting the apparatus of Fregean semantics.

Accommodating the first point about the need for different thoughts or propositions expressed is fundamental to Soames' treatment of the puzzle. He is, of course, also fundamentally opposed to the second claim that the differences in the thoughts must be traceable to the differences in the meanings of the terms. Whether one follows Frege and holds that the differences in cognitive value reflect the differences in semantic value, or, as in the case of direct reference, hold that the meanings are the same and that the cognitive difference must therefore be located elsewhere, I now only want to emphasize the point common to both parties of the dispute.

4. Soames' Solution

Frege's puzzle famously constitutes a chief challenge (or embarrassment) for Millian semantics. Allow me to set the scene. Hannah and her companion, a pair of competent, minimally rational English speakers, are stargazing. They have a list of heavenly bodies they are keen on seeing, including "Hesperus" and "Phosphorus." He asks her, "Are Hesperus and Phosphorus visible?" She replies, "Hesperus is visible, but Phosphorus isn't." What does she say, and what propositional attitudes does she thereby express? One option is that she says and believes what her sentence means. This is achieved by her simultaneous endorsement of "Hesperus is visible" and rejection of "Phosphorus is visible." That is, she says,

(7) Hesperus is visible, but Phosphorus is not

and thereby expresses her belief to that effect. A natural reading would then be that

(8) Hannah believes that Hesperus is visible, but Phosphorus is not.

Roughly equivalently, we could say that Hannah believes that Hesperus is visible, on the one hand; and, at the same, Hannah disbelieves that Phosphorus is visible, on the other.

This uncomplicated attribution, however, is generally unavailable to Direct Reference. Given the identical meanings of those two sentences, ascribing a belief with that content is tantamount to saying that the speaker believes that a particular

object simultaneously has and does not have one and the same property. For just as “Hesperus is visible, but Phosphorus is not visible” is semantically equivalent to “Phosphorus is visible but Phosphorus is not visible,” so is “Hannah believes that Hesperus is visible, but Phosphorus is not visible” semantically equivalent to

(9) Hannah believes that Phosphorus is visible and Phosphorus is not visible.

Attribution of this contradictory belief, as part of a description of the speech act, would plainly not do justice to the sincere, literal utterance of a competent speaker. This would render the point her utterance inscrutable. Although there might be cases where such an attribution is warranted, Frege cases aren’t one of them; for the preservation of the speaker’s basic rationality is an essential piece to the puzzle. The point is not that we should always avoid attributing absurdities like (9). When a speaker says something absurd, an accurate attribution requires us to report it as such. Equally, we should not ascribe absurdity when such an ascription is unwarranted. We want such an imputation when it due and not otherwise. This is what warrants (8) but not (9). The problem with the semantic equivalence DR posits between (8) and (9) is this. If the semantic content of (8) accurately describes the speaker, then, according to DR, the semantic content of (9) should serve just as well. As it evidently does not, we fare better by not conflating their contents. As (8) succeeds as a rationalization where (9) does not, we query whether the content of each rationalization is the same.

5. Soames’s solution is to block this result by, in effect, refusing to use the speaker’s own words in describing her belief. Toward this end, he exploits the general capacity of speakers to communicate something other than, or in addition to, the propositions semantically expressed by their utterances. Rather than taking Hannah’s simultaneous endorsement of “Hesperus is visible” and rejection of “Phosphorus is visible” to warrant attributing attitudes with those contents, he opts instead to attribute attitudes whose contents are arrived at by uncovering the speaker’s unspoken “pragmatic descriptive enrichments” of the sentences she explicitly uttered.

When Hannah endorses “Hesperus is visible,” she might merely mean to express her belief that Hesperus is visible, and nothing more than that, to be sure. But she may instead wish to express something more, or other, than that proposition, even when she doesn’t make the additional content explicit.⁸ For example, she might have

⁸ In earlier work culminating in his (2002), Soames held that the Russellian proposition (RP) semantically expressed by any declarative utterance of a singular sentence is always among the propositions asserted and believed, whether or not other enriched propositions are as well. In his (2004) he holds instead that the semantically expressed RP might not be among the propositions asserted and believed, rather than just the enrichments of it. When there is no enrichment, there will just be the RP. He says that we can then picture the semantic content as a “gappy propositional matrix” with the gaps filled in with a descriptive enrichment or closed in the absence of one. So instead of the ordered pair, we would have <__, Hesperus, visibility>. What is asserted would then either be the enriched RP resulting from filling in the gap, or the unenriched RP resulting from its

intended to assert a proposition like the one that would be expressible by an utterance of “Hesperus, the brightest object in the night sky, is visible.” Similarly, in rejecting “Phosphorus is visible” Hannah might have intended to assert, not merely that Phosphorus is not visible, but rather that Phosphorus, the brightest object in the morning sky, is not visible. In place of (9), then, Soames would instate a sentence like

(10) Hannah believes that Hesperus, the brightest object in the night sky is visible, and that Phosphorus, the brightest object in the morning sky, is not visible.

We now have the materials to see how Soames could sidestep the potential dilemma. Both sentences are treated as expressing assertions and beliefs whose contents are pragmatic descriptive enrichments of the propositions semantically expressed by those utterances. The upshot of attributing these pragmatically enriched propositions to speakers who express conflicting attitudes with sentences which differ only in the substitution of one co-referring term for another, and consequently have the same content—instead of identifying the content of the attitudes with the content of the sentences uttered—is to find a way to avoid attribution of that absurd, puzzling proposition, by appealing to the disparate descriptions which the speaker associates with the two names. The belief-content reported by (10) appears to accommodate the relevant linguistic behavior—the utterance of (7). When the contents of both of the speakers attitudes towards (1) and (2) are pragmatically enriched propositions, as in (10), (8) and (9) need not be true of the speaker. However, Soames also need not sacrifice his insistence on inter-substitutability of directly co-referring terms in attitude contexts, and so maintain that sentences like (8) and (9) are both necessarily true whenever one or the other is. All of Soames’ responses to Frege cases proceed in this way. If such a strategy is generally warranted in the context of Frege cases, then Soames avoids attributing the absurdity apparently necessitated by his semantics.

6. The Problems of Pragmatic Descriptive Enrichment

Now one immediate problem with this strategy is that it seems to have no way of accommodating what appears to be, if not the most plausible description of the speaker’s beliefs, at least a possible one. That is, why should we exclude the possibility, in advance, that neither proposition is enriched? Might Hannah have endorsed “Hesperus is visible” in order to express nothing more than her belief that Hesperus is visible, while rejecting “Phosphorus is visible” in order to express nothing more than her disbelief that Phosphorus is visible—without necessarily lapsing into inexplicable incoherence? It seems at least possible that a speaker may merely wish to express her belief that Hesperus is visible and disbelief that Phosphorus is visible by simultaneously taking rationally conflicting attitudes

closing. His point is that the speech act and attitude content need not always include the unenriched RP in addition to an enrichment of it. As he does not hold further that this content is never the unenriched RP, it does not affect the discussion below.

toward a pair of sentences to that effect. But Direct Reference appears to lack the resources to make such an option intelligible. For the only available alternative, in the absence of enrichment, is to attribute an absurdity. This would equally fail to render the natural reading intelligible.

In dealing generally with Frege puzzles, then, it seems that the only two options available to Soames are enrichment or incoherence. The second will clearly fall short of delivering a passable report. But this situation might be made tolerable, if a general case could be made for enriching at least one of the two sentences in any genuine Frege puzzle. We might look then to the structure of the puzzle for clues. It arises, paradigmatically, from the combination of competence with both terms and ignorance that there is only one object which they both denote. Falsely believing that “Hesperus” and “Phosphorus” denote two distinct objects, the speaker is bound to have some associations with one name, as it figures in her thought and talk, which differ from the other. One might then seize on the speaker’s ignorance and the cognitive differences it could generate to argue—virtually *a priori*, as it were—that at least one pragmatic descriptive enrichment is always in principle available.

The implications of the speaker’s ignorance, however, point in the opposite direction. It is precisely because the speaker in a Frege puzzle does not know that the two names are both names for the same thing that the need to disambiguate between them need not occur to her. This can be seen by comparing the semantic and epistemic standing of a speaker in a Frege puzzle, with respect to “Hesperus” and “Phosphorus,” to that same speaker’s standing with respect to two other names with which she’s competent and believes are names for different objects.

Suppose, then, that Hannah is also competent with “Pluto” and “Neptune,” and believes (correctly) that they denote different entities. Consequently, she associates different descriptions with each name and has different beliefs about their bearers. Similarly, Hannah’s competent with “Hesperus” and “Phosphorus” and believes (incorrectly) that they denote different entities. Consequently, when she says things of the form “Hesperus is F” she’ll take herself to be expressing something different from when she says, “Phosphorus is F,” precisely because she believes that they refer to different objects.

Now, when she simultaneously endorses “Pluto is visible” and rejects “Neptune is visible,” whatever other beliefs she has about the objects of her thoughts, and whatever descriptions she may associate with these names, she need not intend to assert this additional content in adopting rationally conflicting attitudes toward these sentences. Although she may at times draw on these descriptions, her capacity for singular reference and thought do not require that it always be mediated by them. Rather, on certain occasions, she could merely intend to express her belief that Pluto is visible and her belief that Neptune is not.

There is no principled reason why the situation would not remain the same, when we replace “Pluto” and “Neptune” above with “Hesperus” and “Phosphorus.” The conditions for her semantic competence with all four names are of the same kind. Further, the speaker believes that each pair of names picks out a different object from the other. The difference, again, is that in the case of “Neptune” and “Pluto” this belief is true, but false in the case of “Hesperus” and “Phosphorus.” But from the speaker’s standpoint, matters remain the same. Once a speaker has gained competence with “Hesperus” and “Phosphorus,” she can use them to express un-enriched thoughts about what is in fact the same bearer. Her adventitious ignorance of co-reference need not interfere with her ability to exercise this capacity.

The main difference it makes is in increasing the likelihood of thought-expression without enrichment. For she could routinely assume that her audience also shares her beliefs that either pair of names are not co-referring. In consequence, descriptive enrichment of such a sentence need not serve any conversational purpose. Her audience will understand her simply in virtue of apprehending her claim that the object denoted by “Neptune” is visible, though the object denoted by “Pluto” isn’t. On those same grounds, she could very often have no reason to assert a descriptively enriched proposition in saying that “Hesperus is visible, but Phosphorus is not.” Similarly, she could act on the assumption that her audience also shares her belief that “Hesperus” and “Phosphorus” denote different entities. In that case, descriptive enrichment could very well not strike her as serving any communicative ends, and would consequently not be a part of whatever belief she intended to assert.

To be clear, I don’t deny that a speaker who can use a name with understanding doesn’t possess at least some, perhaps dimly held, descriptively expressible beliefs about it. So allow, then, that Hannah has some beliefs, descriptively expressible, that she associates with each name. We can grant, too, though this would require some argument, that these name-associations, whether they be descriptive or some other form, are necessary to come to understand utterances containing the name, or to use it to entertain a thought about its reference. The general point still applies. These particular cognitive connections to the name—whatever they may be—need not figure in all, or even any, of the contents which she intends to express by means of that name. Perhaps speakers are sometimes unconscious of them. The fact that speakers associate certain things with the names used in their sentences need not place those associations in the contents of what they express by intentionally uttering them. Accordingly, they shouldn’t be necessary or always relevant for understanding their utterances.

To summarize: in the case of “Hesperus”/“Phosphorus,” as in the parallel case of “Neptune”/“Pluto,” the speaker’s belief that the two names don’t co-refer makes it plausible that she will in many instances simply presuppose that her audience shares this belief. Consequently, she needn’t consider her various associations with the name relevant to her conversational purposes, and so not intend to assert it. For that reason, however she thinks of the two names she uses, they could very well not

be available to her audience, either as part of her hearer's background knowledge or as a salient feature of the context of the conversation. Direct Reference, therefore, gains no support from the fact of the speaker's ignorance.

The wider significance, for mounting a case in favor of pragmatic enrichment, is that it depends on grossly overstating the availability and relevance of the kind of descriptive content Soames needs to draw on in order to avoid absurdity or incoherence. Absent the materials for a pragmatic enrichment, the theory is forced to report the speaker's beliefs using the sentences she uttered. The content of these sentences, and therefore the content of the beliefs she expressed, will, according to Direct Reference, be the same. This generates the plainly unsatisfactory result that the speaker intended to express the belief that Venus both is and is not visible.

7. Soames might respond that it's not always a requirement, in order to make sense of the speaker's conflicting attitudes in terms of pragmatic enrichment, that the descriptive content attributed to her figure in the content she intends to express. As long as the hearer knows that there must be some description the speaker associates with one name but not the other—even if he has no idea what that might be—he possesses general grounds for enrichment. That is, he is warranted in claiming that the speaker's thought-contents must differ according to some descriptive content or another. And that is enough to salvage the rationality of communication.

This is potentially problematic in at least two sorts of cases. In the first, the hearer is in the same semantic and epistemic situation as the speaker. That is, he's competent with both names, but doesn't realize that they co-refer. Consequently, there will be no occasion for enrichment. So when he thinks to himself, "Hannah believes that Hesperus is visible, but that Phosphorus isn't," Direct Reference is constrained to attribute the same incoherent belief to him as it is to her. In this case, the opportunity for pragmatic enrichment as a solution to Frege cases will not be available to all competent speakers of the language, but only to those who understand both terms *and* know that they co-refer. Knowing that Hesperus is Phosphorus, however, is not a condition on being a competent speaker of English.

In the second, the hearer's epistemic situation is different from the speaker's, insofar as he knows that the two names co-refer. Upon hearing her utterances, he may realize that Hannah herself is innocent of that knowledge. That realization could lead him to surmise, correctly, that Hannah did not mean to express the absurd proposition, and that she therefore must have meant to express two different thoughts. But this just leaves us at the beginning. What he now knows are some of the features of Frege's puzzle—that the speaker is ignorant of co-reference, that the thoughts she meant to express must be something other than the absurdity of a certain object possessing and not possessing particular property at once. What he does not know, on the basis of this realization, are the beliefs that Hannah meant to express through her speech acts. Pending that knowledge, all he has done is familiarize himself with a Frege case—not resolved it.

Soames could contend that once the hearer has reached this point, he is in a position, via pragmatic descriptive enrichment, to uncover the beliefs the speaker intended to express. He could report Hannah's attitudes as expressing beliefs of the form expressible as "Hesperus, the F, is visible" and "Phosphorus, the G, is visible," respectively, for different descriptions "the F" and "the G." But he may have no idea how Hannah conceived of the object of her thoughts. Given that imparting that aspect of her thought need not have been any part of Hannah's communicative goals, he might have no access to it as a relevant feature of the context. Moreover, it is far from guaranteed that a hearer will always be in a position to ask the speaker what she had in mind. Perhaps these realizations only occurred to him after the conversation. Nevertheless, Soames might maintain that the hearer could make sense of Hannah's utterances through enrichments of his own. In the entirely possible event that his own idiosyncratic associations with the names do not approach hers, however, the descriptions he gives for the belief attribution would fail to capture the beliefs Hannah intended to express. For example, he could put forward the following:

- (11) Hannah believes that Hesperus, the son of the dawn goddess Eos, is visible."
(12) Hannah disbelieves that Phosphorus, the father of Daedalion, is visible."

But Hannah, not being a student or devotee of Greek and Roman mythology, could find these attributions utterly incomprehensible as descriptions of her beliefs. Here the hearer would radically misrecognize the speaker's beliefs, and these attributions would only fare slightly better than attributing the absurd belief to her would. Short of positing that there are certain descriptions that all competent users of a name possess—which would be inimical to Soames' anti-descriptivist starting-point—his procedure of pragmatic enrichment will not work. The upshot is that even a hearer who is in a superior epistemic situation to the speaker, realizes the speaker's ignorance, and is capable of offering enrichments of his own, could still quite easily fail to apprehend the speaker's beliefs by means of Soames' procedure.

Even when a hearer like the one just considered does happen to be privy to some of the speaker's associations with a name, these could nonetheless fall far short of rendering the speech acts intelligible. Suppose, then, that for whatever reason Hannah's audience knows that her grandfather first showed her Hesperus and taught her to identify it as such, that is, as "Hesperus." Still, there will be innumerable contexts where explaining Hannah's "Hesperus"-expressed thought in terms of the following will not suffice.

- (13) Hannah believes that Hesperus, which her grandfather showed her, is visible."

Although her audience somehow knows this, maybe Hannah completely forgot how she learned about Hesperus. In such circumstances, and others, the attribution of this belief to her will not make intentional sense of her behavior. Similarly, in a variation on this case, the hearer only knows one description which the speaker

associates with the names, and it turns out the speaker associates that description with both names. In this situation, the hearer could only offer the following for Hannah's "Phosphorus"-utterance:

(14) Hannah disbelieves that Phosphorus, which her grandfather showed her, is visible.

By lacking a discriminating description between the two, even this uncommonly knowledgeable hearer lacks a sufficient conception of the speaker's beliefs. The result, again, is that he cannot make adequate sense of the speaker's utterance.

Finally, a last-ditch attempt on Soames' part could be to enrich Hannah's beliefs in the most minimal way possible. In circumstances where every other potential description is either unavailable or unsuitable, could either of the following suffice?

(15) Hannah believes that Hesperus, which she calls 'Hesperus,' is visible."

(16) Hannah disbelieves that Phosphorus, which she calls 'Phosphorus,' is visible."

This still faces familiar difficulties. First, it will only be occur to those audiences who are not in the same semantic and epistemic situation as the speaker. Second, it could in many cases fail to capture the actual beliefs the speaker intended to express. When Hannah said, "Hesperus is visible," she did so to express her belief about a certain state of the world—that Hesperus is visible—not a metalinguistic belief about the words she employs in doing so.⁹

8. These same difficulties also beset the semantics of identity-statements formed by means of two co-referring names or natural kind terms. Soames' Millian stance toward proper names leads inexorably to his essentially descriptive treatment of the understanding of them. Because Soames regards 'Hesperus is Hesperus,' "Phosphorus is Phosphorus," and "Hesperus is Phosphorus" as all expressing the same meaning, his response to Frege's puzzle must draw on the subjective conceptions that speakers and hearers associate with the names. To explain how someone equipped to understand "Hesperus is Phosphorus" can nevertheless fail to realize its truth, Soames says that what is understood is not that Hesperus is Phosphorus, as he construes its content, but rather that Hesperus, the F, is Phosphorus, the G. In addition to the reasons for doubting the general applicability and relevance of the descriptive materials needed for this solution adduced above,

⁹ Now it could be replied that the speaker intended to say something about both the word and the world. But this introduces a wider set of worries. Criticizing Robert Stalnaker's (1978) metalinguistic account of the informativeness of identity-sentences, Jason Stanley (2011, p. 101) observes that such a strategy would prevent a monolingual English speaker from reporting ancient Babylonian beliefs using "Hesperus" and "Phosphorus," pressuring the plausibility of metalinguistic account of belief reports. In a similar vein, Marga Reimer (2002) objects to John Perry's (2001) metalinguistic account on the grounds that we need worldly knowledge, as opposed to the merely metalinguistic, to capture the desired differences in cognitive value.

a further difficulty with Soames' maneuver is that it leads to his contention that the semantic content of "Hesperus is Phosphorus," and the like, are both necessary *and* knowable a priori¹⁰, contra Kripke (and others, such as Marcus or Wiggins), who have argued forcefully that such true statements of identity constitute instances of necessary but *a posteriori* knowledge.¹¹

Soames' reasoning is simple. Since "Hesperus is Hesperus" is a priori, and "Hesperus is Phosphorus" means the exact same thing, it too must be a priori. Only through enrichment do we get statements of an a posteriori (and, although this consequence goes unremarked, contingent) character, as in "Hesperus, the F, is Phosphorus, the G." But this is wildly implausible, overlooking the objectual, astronomical character of the discovery that Hesperus is Phosphorus. Prior to the discovery, many could be said to possess the knowledge expressed by "Hesperus is Hesperus." Only after it could they possess the knowledge expressed by "Hesperus is Phosphorus." These brief remarks are not intended as a full-fledged argument, but they do indicate strong *prima facie* reasons to resist drawing such a strong epistemological conclusion from such a slender semantical reed.

9. Before taking stock, I would like to distinguish my argument from another against Soames, Sider & Braun's,¹² which is based on a specific variation on Kripke's 'semantic' argument against the descriptivist determination of the reference of a proper name. They write:

About to give a lecture, Gödel is introduced by his host as follows: "We are very pleased to have the person who proved the incompleteness of arithmetic with us today. Professor Gödel will speak on logic." Gödel's host believes the partially descriptive proposition, Gödel, the person who prove the incompleteness of arithmetic, will speak on logic, and even intends the audience to come to believe this proposition. Thus, it seems that on Soames's theory, the host descriptively enriches 'Gödel' with 'the person who proved the incompleteness of arithmetic', and asserts the descriptive proposition when he utters (G).

(G) Professor Gödel will speak on logic.

Now suppose that, as in Kripke's example, Gödel never proved the incompleteness of arithmetic. Someone else, Schmidt, did. Soames must then say that the host asserted something false by uttering (G). Doesn't that seem wrong? (662)

The main problem with this is the transition from a pretty plausible point about what Gödel's host says and believes by this sequence of utterances—both that Gödel is the person who proved the incompleteness of arithmetic and that Gödel will speak on logic on that day—and the two further points that "the host descriptively

¹⁰ Soames (2002), pp. 235-240

¹¹ Marcus (1967), Wiggins (1971), Kripke (1972/1980)

¹² Sider & Braun (2006)

enriches ‘Gödel’ with ‘the person who proved the incompleteness of arithmetic’ and that he “asserts the descriptive proposition when he utters (G).” Since this descriptive content was just expressed by the utterance immediately preceding (G), why should we suppose that it figures in the content of the assertion of (G)? It would be entirely redundant, adding nothing to the conversational score or common ground.¹³ It is not asserted by (G) because it is already asserted by the utterance—let us call it (G’)—immediately preceding it. So there appears to be no value or utility in enriching the occurrence of “Gödel” in (G) with that definite description. To be sure, the descriptive content in (G’) is useful for the audience’s identification of the relevant referent of “Gödel” in this context. But for that very reason, there’s no point or purpose to it figuring in an enrichment of (G). There seems to be no reason for conflating the contents of (G) and (G’). It’s difficult to see, then, why this example should force Soames to accept the false descriptively enriched reading of (G), rather than accepting the true, unenriched reading of (G) with an acceptance that the definite description in (G’) is, *ex hypothesi*, false of Gödel.

Soames, however, takes the bait. He writes, “Did the host say something false ‘by uttering (G). [sic]’ I think so—in the sense that uttering (G) contributed to the false assertion, even though it was not the only contributing factor” (718)¹⁴. Instead of maintaining the truth of (G) together with the description in (G’) as false of Gödel, he maintains that the utterance of those two sentences here express only one asserted proposition: “he said, of Gödel, that he both proved the incompleteness of arithmetic and would speak on logic—even though this was false” (718). He buttresses this by appealing to the claim that sometimes multiple utterances only make a single assertion. One need have no truck with this claim to deny its application to the example at hand. Suppose a speaker utters, “Who is Gödel? He is only the discover of incompleteness!” She utters a sequence of two sentences—an interrogative followed by a declarative—uttering the first rhetorically and the second exclamationally—whereby her assertion is made only by the second. Still, in the example presented by Sider and Braun, I see no reason not to recognize two distinct assertions effected by two distinct utterances in sequence. I thus find both the objection and response off base here. Even if Soames is right about descriptive enrichment generally, Sider & Braun’s example does not seem to compel it. And so Soames seems not to have to saddle himself with it by opting for a single, false conjunctive assertion, rather than the truth his adherence to rigidity makes a natural fit.

10. Conclusion

The thrust of my argument is rather that the attempt to preserve linguistic rationality non-semantically, as Direct Reference must, leads to a kind of *psychologism* about meaning. The meanings of utterances in ordinary circumstances too often become a matter of guesswork or speculation about aspects of the subjectivities of speakers, which Frege, Kripke, and others sought to drive out of

¹³ See Lewis (1979) and Stalnaker (1978).

¹⁴ Soames (2006)

theorizing about meaning.¹⁵ There is an unhappy irony here for this contemporary Millianism, which developed as a reaction to Kripke's anti-descriptivist arguments. In rejecting descriptivism at the level of meaning, they go too far by simply equating meaning with reference. The unintended consequence is descriptivism at the level of thought, which is just as spurious as their original target.

Direct Reference's refusal to recognize a semantic difference among co-referring terms of certain classes, tied to its catholic principle of inter-substitutability, leads to its inability to resolve Frege's puzzle under various conditions. For it to work in these cases, it would have to impose greater epistemic burdens on ordinary speaker-hearers than their basic competence and rationality require. In the absence of this additional knowledge, the theory is compelled variously to attribute either plainly absurd or wildly speculative attitudes to subjects, the imputation of which beggars belief.

By contrast, an approach which does countenance a difference in content between co-referring terms will not be forced to rely on an ordinary audience's capacity to divine the intentions of speakers. The problems generated by extraneous belief attributions won't arise, because such attributions won't be warranted by the speaker's behavior and her linguistic environment in the first place. Similarly, Soames' reliance on periphrastic propositional attitude ascriptions, and the difficult guesswork it can demand, won't arise if the meanings of the two names are different. In these cases, we can say that the contents of the speaker's beliefs do in fact differ, and that this difference reflects the difference in the semantic contents of the names. The larger implication is that in order to account for the rationality of speech, of which Frege's puzzle is one historically important benchmark, we need a conception of content organized around the notion of rationality itself. Rather than treat the rationality of speech as an afterthought to the notion of content, as Millians and others do, we must recognize its constitutive role at the outset of any semantic enterprise.

¹⁵ Of course natural language comprehension is rife with reliable forms of pragmatic processing that are not left to guesswork. The difference between them and the applicability of Soames' procedure of pragmatic descriptive enrichment in the range of cases discussed above is the lack of contextual cues used in the comprehension of underspecified content. Cf., for example, the availability of contextual information in the interpretation of vague scalar predicates examined in Devault & Stone (2004) with the relative absence of any such contextual information in the situations Soames' solution to Frege's puzzle compels him to confront.

THE FIXATION OF REFERENCE

The name was fine, fine—the mere sound of it: yet they got it into their fat heads that the name was not satisfactory: they met, put the old name aside for a new name: changed Longacoming to Berlin: oh God!

Walt Whitman¹⁶

1. Introduction

The question is what determines the reference of any given use of a proper name as an element in a public language.¹⁷ This is “the Reference-Fixing Question,” as Imogen Dickie puts it: “How is it determined which object (if any) is the bearer of a proper name as used by a community of speakers.”¹⁸ There are two aspects to this. What is it for a proper name to have particular bearer among a group of speakers who use the name in thought and talk about that bearer? For example, what is it for the vocable “Obama” to be a proper name for a certain particular, such as the current President of the United States? What it is for any given use of “Obama” to maintain its community-wide reference? That is, given the fact that, within a range of uses, “Obama” functions as a proper name for Barack Obama—roughly, the linguistic community for “Obama”—how does a given occurrence of it within this range preserve and transmit this reference?

In this regard, it is helpful to distinguish between how an expression “NN” is first *introduced* into a linguistic community as a name for a particular thing, on the one hand, and how its reference is *transmitted* in subsequent uses as a name for the object of its initial introduction, on the other. Consider, for instance, an utterance of

(1) Obama smokes.

If the occurrence of “Obama” is a proper name for a particular individual, the correctness of (1) hangs on whether that individual smokes or not. How then is “Obama” first introduced into a linguistic community as proper name for this particular individual? Second, how is this reference preserved in ongoing use, such that this bearer is what a given use like (1) of the name could refer?

2. Now my plan is as follows. I first set the stage against the background of a dialectic beginning in the mid-century clash between classical descriptivism, typified by Searle (1958), forcefully countered by Kripke (1972), who in turn faces a challenge from Evans (1973) over the inadvertent reference-shift undergone by “Madagascar.” After presenting the elements of Evans’ mature account of reference

¹⁶ Traubel (1914), p. 123

¹⁷ In Kripke’s (1977) terms, this is the question of ‘semantic reference’ rather than ‘speaker reference’ which is a matter of what a speaker intends to refer to by a given use of an expression or term.

¹⁸ Dickie (2010), p. 43.

(Evans 1982) I apply them to the case of “Madagascar.” From there I consider a contemporary challenge to Evans coming from Imogen Dickie. In responding to Dickie’s challenge, I propose a view of the determination of reference, in the spirit of Evans, and apply it to completing the story of “Madagascar.” My central claim is this: an object *o* is the referent of a speaker’s given use of proper name “NN,” provided that the rational source of the speaker’s information is the name-using-practice *P* the speaker intends to be participating in by the given use of “NN.”

3. Descriptivism and its Discontents

The question about the reference of proper names has been driven largely by a debate that begins in the mid-20th century between a position labeled ‘descriptivism’ by its detractors and the revolt against it led in large part by Saul Kripke.¹⁹

Searle. The canonical descriptivist position comes from John Searle in his paper “Proper Names,”²⁰ the *locus classicus* of the view, and is geared chiefly to the second question. Searle holds that each proper name for a particular object is “logically connected” to an inclusive disjunction of definite descriptions “commonly attributed” to the name by its users, regarded as what is uniquely satisfied by its bearer. What determines the reference of a name on any given use is a matter of which object uniquely satisfies the descriptions. Schematically, users of “NN” might commonly associate “the F,” “the G,” and “the H” as what is uniquely satisfied by the bearer of “NN.” In treating “Aristotle,” for instance, as a name for a particular individual, a descriptivist might cite “the teacher of Alexander,” “the philosopher born in Stagira” and “the last great philosopher of antiquity” as descriptions commonly possessed by competent speakers of “Aristotle.” What determines the reference of a given use of “Aristotle” in, say, an utterance of the sentence “Aristotle is wise” is the unique satisfaction by an individual of enough of these descriptions. Any “Aristotle”-utterance from the group of speakers governed by such descriptive content will refer accordingly. The name refers in these uses to what it does, a particular philosopher, rather than anyone or anything else so-called, such as a certain shipping magnate or a particular pet dog, since only he uniquely satisfies the descriptive content that determines him as the reference of “Aristotle.” If it turns out that Plato instead satisfies them, then, on these speakers’ lips, “Aristotle” would refer to Plato. The correctness of an utterance of “Aristotle is wise” would then depend on whether Plato, not Aristotle, is wise or not.

¹⁹ Although Kripke criticizes descriptivism about both introduction and transmission, it is unclear whether anyone has ever espoused descriptivism about introduction. As discussed below, Searle certainly does not. And while the independence of the two allows for it, it lacks evident appeal.

²⁰ Searle (1958). Ayer (1964) also propounds the kind of descriptivism Kripke criticizes. While the inspiration for descriptivism drew on these authors’ readings of Frege and Russell, I resist attributing the view to the latter pair. See Sainsbury (1993) for a protest on behalf of Russell, and Dummett (1987: Ch.9) Evans (1982: Ch.1) and McDowell (2005) for one on Frege’s.

Now this fate is not forgone simply whenever some of the descriptions turn out not to fit who or what the others do. If it were discovered that it was Plato who was the teacher of Alexander, that should encourage its removal from the store of descriptions governing “Aristotle.” But it need not itself signal the failure to use “Aristotle” for Aristotle—i.e. the referent determined by the rest of the defining descriptions. So it is not a requirement that all be uniquely satisfied by the same individual, provided that enough of the common store of them are.²¹ If nothing uniquely satisfies a sufficient number of them, however, the name has no bearer. It should be thus declared empty, failing to refer, for no such thing uniquely exists to be determined as the reference of “Aristotle.”

So Searle’s descriptivism is a descriptivism about the determination of reference, rather than its mere introduction, as distinguished above. Searle’s claim is not that, when an expression is first introduced as a name for a particular, what initially binds the name to the object is that object’s satisfying some descriptions. He describes how an object is singled out by either ostension or description so that a name can simply be conferred on it. Indeed, his stated aim is not to deny that the initial fixation proceeds by way of referential assignment rather than descriptive satisfaction. And he can allow (as he later does in response to Kripke)²² that its transmission requires reference-preserving intentions along a causal chain.

Further, Searle’s descriptivism about the determination of reference does not extend to descriptivism about meaning (as Russell’s “disguised descriptions” standardly suggest).²³ According to him, proper names do not describe characteristics of their bearers, and have no Fregean sense given by them. The role of the inclusive disjunction of descriptions is in the determination of reference alone. Consequently, what is semantically expressed in uses of the name does not typically include the descriptive content that determines its reference. Rather than being a part of what is asserted, they are instead “presupposed” as a condition of reference. That a name is not a shorthand for the reference-determining descriptions presupposed in its use allows Searle to offer a smooth account of empty names in true negative existentials. As uses of “Cerberus”-utterances merely presuppose its descriptive conditions of reference, then, in an utterance of “Cerberus does not exist,” it does not express them. Rather, what is said by such an utterance is that nothing satisfies the relevant descriptions presupposed as a constitutive condition of reference. But it need not express the content of any of these in doing so, any more than any other such occurrence of “Cerberus” does.

In sum, descriptivism about the determination of reference would hold that as a speaker utters (1), he or she does so backed by a store of definite descriptions tied to the name by its competent users. The reference of “Obama” is then determined by

²¹ Searle does not discuss how to rate the relative importance of descriptions. Strawson (1959: Ch.1), proposes a way to weight them.

²² Searle (1983: Ch.9).

²³ Russell (1905). But again, cf. Sainsbury (1993)

whatever uniquely satisfies them. If, prominent among them, are “the current President of the U.S.,” Barack Obama would be certified as the reference. If instead it is “the current First Lady,” then it would be Michelle Obama. It is one set rather than the other that is regularly presupposed by speakers, though neither are regularly asserted. So the descriptions would not figure in the semantic content expressed by an utterance of (1) in any case. However, if the speaker’s associated descriptions had derived, say, from mistakenly treating tales of a figure in Kenyan mythology for an historical account, then the name would be empty. In such a scenario, the descriptivist aims to make sense of the true negative existential, “Obama does not exist,” by adverting to the descriptive conditions for reference, and saying that nothing uniquely satisfies them.

4. *Kripke* The appeal of descriptivism led to a kind of orthodoxy, evidenced by Searle’s authorship of the entry on proper names in the *Encyclopedia of philosophy* (1967), as John Burgess observes.²⁴ Nonetheless, Saul Kripke famously made trouble for it, in both its forms—meaning and reference.²⁵ His vivid counter-examples were designed to show that a speaker’s possession of a uniquely identifying descriptive content is neither necessary nor sufficient for the determination of reference. That the descriptive content a speaker primarily associates with the names “Feynman” and “Gell-man” is in both cases merely “a famous physicist” need not deprive the speaker of referring with the names. Conversely, a speaker’s possession of a uniquely identifying description for a name, such as “the discoverer of the incompleteness of arithmetic” for “Gödel,” need not undermine her reference, even if the description turns out to fit a certain Schmidt instead. In either case, the correctness of any sentence of the form “Feynman is F” or “Gödel is F” depends solely on whether the respective individuals referred to by those names in the relevant speech communities satisfy the predicate at hand.

In Kripke’s alternative account of reference—‘the historical chain of communication picture’—neither the introduction nor the transmission of reference is descriptively determined. In its introduction, an object is first singled out, and in being brought thus into view, bestowed the name. An expression first connects with an object as its name in virtue of that object being assigned that name as its bearer²⁶, a process which Kripke puts picturesquely in terms of an “original baptism.” For this initial referential assignment to stick, it must be subsequently used with the intention of preserving it. What determines the reference of a name is the joint fact of a determinate object being assigned the name and the transmission of the name through speakers’ reference-preserving intentions along the links of a chain extending back to the original baptism. Each link is bound to each other through speakers’ intention to conform to past use.

²⁴ Burgess (2013)

²⁵ Kripke (1972/1980)

²⁶ Cf. Anscombe (1959: 41-44) for a precursor to this point.

Kripke is careful to distinguish the materials which go in to the initial fixation—various perceptual and descriptive characterizations of an object—from what then determines reference in subsequent uses. And what holds for introduction into a linguistic community holds also for introduction into a speaker's repertoire. Whether a speaker learns a name via description or ostension, it need not continue to serve a further role in reference and meaning. That an object is singled out as "the F" in the course of its baptism or in later learning the name does not determine "NN" as the referent of whatever (if any) is uniquely F. While such descriptive materials are useful in introduction and transmission, their role is purely instrumental—in directing speakers' reference-preserving intentions to the relevant chain of communication. What facilitates this process neither constitutes a descriptive condition for reference nor figures in what uses of the name semantically express.

In Kripke's alternative picture, then, a proper name does not stand for its bearer by a relation of unique satisfaction of descriptive content, but rather through contextual relations between speakers and objects. The salient contrast of course is with a definite description, which is first related to an object (if any) by a relation of unique satisfaction to a specification, which is in turn often treated as part of what is said by utterances containing it. A proper name, by contrast, neither stands for its object by such a relation nor semantically expresses it. In consequence, the correctness of "Gödel is the discover of the incompleteness of arithmetic" depends on whether the individual denoted by "Gödel" in the way Kripke describes satisfies the descriptive predicate with which it is here concatenated. Since the reference of "Gödel" is Gödel, the sentence is true just in case Gödel is the discover of incompleteness. If instead another individual, Schmidt, answers to the description, then the uttered sentence simply expresses a false statement about *Gödel*, rather than a true statement about Schmidt.

5. *Evans' Challenge*. Despite these genuine advances in our understanding of the way proper names relate language to reality, there is room to doubt the sufficiency of Kripke's conditions.

Examining Kripke's conditions for reference, Evans observes that "Madagascar" once referred to a portion of the African mainland, but at some point in the chain ceased to refer to it, coming to refer instead to the African island we now use it to name.²⁷ Despite the apparent satisfaction of Kripke's conditions, reference was not preserved. Evans' challenge to Kripke is to explain this shift in reference without falling back on descriptivism. Kripke recognizes Evans' challenge in the addenda to N&N, but appeals only to the "the social character of naming," deferring further discussion to future writing.²⁸ Evans, for his part, does not advocate a retreat back

²⁷ Evans (1973)

²⁸ As recently as the 2013 book publication of Kripke's 1973 Locke Lectures, where he again registers the insufficiency of his conditions in light of Evans' challenge (2013:137), Kripke has yet to address it in print. As I discuss below, however, Kripke's original appeal to the social character of naming is suggestive, and I think deeply in line with the drift Evans takes.

to descriptivism, and accepts Kripke's positive points about introduction through referential assignment and transmission through subsequent speakers' reference-preserving intentions. Whatever the further details of his own account, they should incorporate these points.

While Evans sketches a response of his own in the original paper where he mounts this challenge, it is based on a picture of reference he drops in his later account of proper names²⁹. And perhaps because his time ran out, Evans did not there tackle the vexed question of the reference-shift "Madagascar" underwent. So what I would like to do now is, first, reconstruct Evans' account of the determination of the reference of a proper name, in the pursuit of a more adequate general conception, and then test it by applying it to the case of "Madagascar."

6. A Proper-Name-Using Practice

According to Evans, a proper-name-using practice is one in which "NN" is a proper name used to refer to a particular individual *x*. It is anchored by "a core group of speakers"—*producers*-- who are "acquainted" (1982: 376) with *x* in the sense that they could demonstratively identify the relevant particular and judge the truth of "This is *x*." Together with a recognitional capacity to re-identify persons over time, they can further judge the truth of "This is NN." The producers of a practice are thus those who not only know *x*, but know *x* further as "NN." They use "NN" in their interactions with *x*, in referring to *x* as "NN" in their interactions with each other, and in storing and transmitting information about *x* under the "dossier" or "file" labeled "NN." The practice could begin in a baptism (à la Kripke) or in situations where a speaker uses an expression which is not a name of *x* as if it were, either knowingly, as a nickname, or unknowingly by mistake. In any case, the expression only becomes a name once it becomes used by those who know *x*. A producer can initiate another speaker as producer by an explicit introduction "This is *x*" or or simply by observing this practice in others—e.g. "Hello, NN."

A consumer is someone who is introduced into the practice without acquaintance with *x*, either by explanations of the form "NN is the *F*" or by simply hearing the use of "NN." Consumers thus do not know *x* as NN, in the sense that producer's do, and are thus limited* in how much information they can introduce into the practice. For if "NN is *F*" is challenged, a producer is capable of defense by adverting to his knowledge of NN as *this individual*, whereas a consumer, lacking this knowledge, is not. As being *F* is not a stipulative condition on the very fixation of the reference of "NN" for *x*, he cannot fall back on a defense that "NN" is just a name for whoever is *F*. Rather, the reference of *x* is anchored by the knowledge that "This is NN." Thus the practice endures over time by the introduction of new members by old, continuing the circulation of information culled in connection with "NN."

²⁹ Evans (1982)

Evans' producers play an analogous role to Putnam's experts for natural kind terms.³⁰ Experts exercise an effective capacity to recognize members of the kind from members of other kinds. Regular and reliable exercises of this capacity create a consistent pattern of objects that are in fact identified as elms or whatever—with the subset of expert “elm”-utterances constituting authoritative instances of calling a certain kind by this term, establishing a fundamental point of contact between language and reality. By analogy, a name-using practice concerns that object (if any) which is regularly called ‘NN’ by the producers of the practice. The referent of a proper name is that object which is consistently identified by the authority of the prevailing parties. This will determine the reference of any given use within the practice, whether they are producers or consumers. Thus Evans writes:

It seems reasonable to suggest that what makes it the case that an ordinary proper-name-using practice involving the name ‘NN’ concerns a particular individual is that that individual should be known to the producers in the practice as NN. It is the actual pattern of dealings the producers have had with an individual—identified from time to time by the exercise of their recognitional capacities in regard to that individual—which ties the name to the individual. The information circulating in the practice will normally provide good evidence for which individual it is that has been recognized from time to time as NN by the producers in the practice, for much of it will be a trace of some encounter between a producer and an individual (1982: 382).

According to Evans, then, what determines the reference of a proper name is simply a particular object *o* being known as “NN” by its “producers.” I suggest we might think about it as follows. What could count as a correct answer to the question “What does ‘NN’ refer to?” The possibility of a correct answer presupposes that a particular thing is called “NN.” And that in turn depends on the existence of a practice in which the expression first emerges as a proper name for a particular bearer. For the question to have any sense at all, then, it must be posed against the background of a particular name-using practice. And it is only answerable in the context of identifying the particular practice. A particular name-using practice is marked, at bottom, by the use of “NN” as a proper name for a particular object *o*. As sketched above, the emergence of any such practice essentially hinges on which independently known object is singled out as what is to be known also as the bearer of “NN.” On the heels of its initial fixation, the reference of “NN” is then determined through the subsequent use of it, guided by the intention of using “NN” as a name for the independently known object *o*. The “producers” of a name-using practice are those who combine their independent knowledge of *o* (“That is *o*”), with the further piece of knowledge that “NN” is a proper name for whatever this independently known object is (thus: “NN is *o*”). As the practice of using “NN” emerges, then, nothing other than what is known to its producers as “NN” determines an object as its referent.

³⁰ Putnam (1975)

Putting the role of producer's in place of Kripke's baptism, Evans subsumes rather than eliminates the role that baptism is meant to play. Reference is fixed according to what producer's know and the activity constitutively controlled by this knowledge. One benefit of this is that it doesn't necessarily tie fixation to an explicit, discrete act of baptism. This allows him to incorporate cases that do not begin in baptism, but which instead emerge through either knowing (nickname) or unknowing (mistake) use. The wider framework for fixation also allows him to underscore the asymmetry between producers and consumers, with the former depending on the latter but not vice versa.

As Evans' notion of a producer succeeds Kripke's notion of a baptism, Evans also widens the scope of a speaker's reference-preserving intention. He writes:

The general principle is this: if a speaker uses a word with the manifest intention to participate in such-and-such a practice, in which the word is used with such-and-such semantic properties, then the word, as used by him, will possess just those semantic properties. This principle has as much application to the use by speakers of words like 'agronomist', 'monetarism', and the like as to their use of proper names. And it can be used to explain the intuition which the Recursive Principle was designed to explain, since it is reasonable to attribute to a speaker the intention to participate, by his use of a name, in the same practice as was being participated in by those speakers from whose use of the name the information he has associated with the name derives.
(1982: 387)

In place of Kripke's recursive reference-preserving intention, Evans puts the intention to participate in the practice from which a speaker derives the information associated with the name. Evans makes it a necessary condition on the preservation of reference in any given use that a speaker *make manifest* (386) which names he intends to use—which practice he intends to be participating in by his use of the name, and taken to be thus participating. It is neither necessary nor sufficient for a speaker to indicate name/practice that he possess a discriminating conception of the relevant referent (387n). Rather, what ties a given use to the fixed referent is the speaker's intention to participate in the practice in which reference is thus fixed. This is broader than Kripke's intention to use a name as the speaker one learned it from does. A further benefit, as I bring out below, is its role in explaining the inadvertent reference shift undergone by "Madagascar."

Moreover, the information with which a consumer is initiated need not be true of the bearer in order for initiation to occur. And indeed all the information in possession of a consumer might be false without thereby undercutting reference. Suppose a producer initiates a consumer with "NN is the F," except that, unbeknownst to both of them, NN is not in fact F. Still, as the producer associates F-ness with "NN," being F is a putative piece of information about the object o he knows as "NN," i.e., misinformation about NN. In thus initiating a consumer into this practice, the consumer intends to use "NN" accordingly. Given this intention, we can identify the practice he wishes to participate in as the practice of the producer from

whom he learned the name. When this consumer says “NN is the F,” what he says is answerable to the referent of “NN” as determined by the practice in which he intends to be participating. If the consumer were to use this false description to initiate another consumer into the practice, the reference of both consumers’ uses of the name would be determined by the identity of the practice in which they each intend to participate. If this is all the information they possess, or if they come to possess only more false information, that need not undercut the determination of reference.

So reference is fixed by the activity of producers who know *x*, know it further as “NN,” use “NN” in their encounters with *x* and in their communication about *x*. They thus build “NN”-file tied to *x* by virtue of their knowledge of it as such. Whatever information they associate with “NN” is *eo ipso* information answerable to *x*. It is information about *x* in the sense that it derives from their dealing with *x* qua referent of “NN”—tied to it, as it is, by their knowledge of *x* as “NN.” In a producer’s use, reference is maintained by their knowledge. The sense in which *x* is the source of their associated with information “NN” is that it is tied to *x* by virtue of their knowledge. Unlike descriptivism, information is not about *x* because *x* uniquely satisfies it.

But it seems to me that producer’s information about *x* need not have *x* has its direct, causal origin either. Whether perceived or misperceived, inferred correctly or incorrectly, communicated or miscommunicated, any information a producer associates with “NN” is answerable to *x*—insofar as the information is tied to *x* by virtue of producer’s knowledge. This information reinforces as it is thus tied to it by producer’s knowledge of reference. In a community of just producers, then, reference is fixed by the knowledge and the core activity around it; and preserved and transmitted by any given use by producer’s knowledge. All pieces of producers’ information anchor the fixed reference by its immediate to producer’s knowledge of reference as the object to which all associated information is ultimately answerable.

How does a use by a consumer share the fixed reference? She is a party to the practice that fixes its referent. Which practice a consumer wishes to be part of depends on the source of the information she associates with the name and draws on in acting on her intention to participate. So what ties a consumer’s use to the fixed reference is its occurrence in the practice that fixes ref. What places it in its practice is a matter of the source of the information the consumer draws on. If the source is the practice, then reference remains fixed.

Evans further distinguishes such a participating consumer from a non-participating one, a ‘parasitic’ kind of consumer, as Dickie labels it. This is a limiting case within the class of consumers are those who possess little or no information, and consequently contribute new information to the practice, as they can merely use but not understand the name. They could still preserve reference in such use by their intention to join the practice from which their acquisition of the name derives. That is, a non-participating consumer intends to join the practice of those speakers from

whom she acquires the name. So the limiting case for consumer participation is the intention to participate in the “NN”-practice, on the grounds that they intend to use “NN” as the speaker from whom they learned it does. Lacking any other information, this could still suffice for reference.

7. Now we can consider how we might bring the materials of Evans’ later view to bear on the question of “Madagascar.” When I say “Madagascar is an island,” I do so as a consumer in the practice initiated by the identification of a particular island as “Madagascar,” and completed when information derived from this place becomes the dominant source of information in producer’s “Madagascar”-files.

Despite my place in a chain of communication reaching back to the baptism of “Madagascar” for the mainland, maintained by my intention to use “Madagascar” as those I learned it from used it, I refer nonetheless to the island alone. My recursive referential intention (what Kripke appeals to) is redirected, as it were, by producer’s identification of this new place as Madagascar, and with it the subsequent amassing of information derived from it. So despite both practices sharing the same such intention, I am a consumer only in the second.

The series of uses of “Madagascar” beginning with Marco Polo, and ending with the establishment of a new practice, can be divided into two phases. The first phase begins with Marco Polo’s acquisition of the name and ends with Diego Dias’ discovery of the island. During this period, the only relevant practice is that marked by the mainland. To the extent that Marco Polo’s meager information comes from any “Madagascar” practice, it would only be this one. And so as he intends to participate in any “Madagascar” practice, it would be this. Recording “Madagascar is an island south of Zanzibar” in his *Travels*, he puts forward a claim about the referent of “Madagascar”—a referent determined by the practice in which he intends to be participating. As it is thus answerable to that referent, it embodies a piece of misinformation about the mainland.

When I say, “Madagascar is an island,” despite my reference-preserving intention stretching back to the mainland, I would only be a participant in the island-practice, as my informational ties are all to the reference determined by this practice. What ties my use of “Mad” in “Mad is an island” to the one island but not the mainland is my intention to use to participate in that practice. Why does my intention relate me to this practice? Which practice a speaker intends by a given use of a name to be participating in depends on the source of the information guiding his use. In general, says Evans, the practice a speaker intends to be participating in is the practice from which the information he associates with the name derives. This is what relates my use of Mad to one practice but not the other. Even the single piece of information “island” could arguably be said to belong to both practices, it is a piece of info, together with other info, supports the ref of the second but not the first. I.e. the second arises from a core group of speakers who know the island as “Mad” and use it accordingly, building up a body of information derived from interactions with the island, not the mainland.

8. So according to Evans what determines *o* as the reference of a given use of “NN” is its occurrence within the practice that fixes reference according to knowledge and activity of producers. Participation at any of the three levels—producer, participating consumer, and non-participating, or ‘parasitic’ consumer—is sufficient to secure this reference, by virtue of it ties to the condition for reference-fixing furnished by the relevant practice. This allows us recognize parasitic consumerism as a limiting case of the preservation of reference in the face of complete lack of understanding, provided there is no breach of epistemic license. The upshot is promising. By subsuming Kripke’s notion of baptism under his notion of a producer, Evans is able to liberate the fixation of reference from a discrete baptism, allowing for the emergence of reference in practices that do not begin in baptism as well as those that do. It further underscores the significant asymmetry between producer and consumer. And together with Evans’ further broadening of the scope of Kripke’s reference-preserving intention, so it is not necessarily beholden to its baptism by an inexorable recursive process extending back to it, Evans opens up the possibility of explaining inadvertent reference shifts like “Madagascar.” While the general intention Kripke homes in on a baptism (*ex hypothesi*) operative for speakers in both old and new practice alike—right on up to my contemporary utterance of “Madagascar is an island,” and beyond—reference shifts according to the emergence of later practice. This is why my use of “Madagascar” in the context of the above sentence has the island alone as its reference. I am a participating consumer in the practice that fixes reference according to a particular island producer’s know as “Madagascar,” and preserves it in ongoing use by exploiting information answerable only to the reference of “Madagascar” within the second proprietary practice alone.

As the role of information does not depend on its being true of, let alone uniquely true of, its reference, it plainly sidesteps the pitfalls of classical descriptivism in the vein of Searle and Ayer. And by liberating the process of fixation from a particular baptismal stipulation, while also widening the reference-preserving so it is not permanently beholden to its baptism (if such there were), Evans remedies the insufficiency of Kripke’s condition without losing any of their intuitive force. A further benefit again is the way this opens up the possibility of explaining inadvertent reference-shifts. Avoiding the pitfalls of both descriptivism and causalism, so construed, Evans’ shift in emphasis constitutes a genuine advance.

9. *Dickie’s Challenge*. Now Imogen Dickie accepts all of this from Evans, and endeavors herself to put forward an Evans-inspired account of reference. However, she provides two counter-examples to Evans’ conditions for the adequacy of consumer information in preserving reference, as she reads them. To begin with, Evans writes:

...it is reasonable to attribute to a speaker the intention to participate, by his use of a name, in the same practice as was being participated in by those speakers from whose use of the name the information has associated with the name derives (Evans 1982: 487).

On the basis of this passage, Dickie attributes to Evans the view that “the a-file of somebody who does not know *o as a* is about *o* if and only if the information in the file is dominantly derived from the contents of the a-files of people who do (or did) know *o as a*.” And she goes on to characterize this as “most of the information” in consumer files “derived from beliefs held by speakers who know Chaucer *as* ‘Chaucer’” (Dickie, 2010: 54).

This provides the rationale for her counterexamples designed to question, first, whether the condition thus characterized is necessary, and, second, sufficient for reference. In her ‘Chaucer’ example, she describes a period following his death where, due to a mass of historical contingencies, most of the information in consumers’ “Chaucer”-files did not derive from beliefs of the producers. This campaign of misinformation prevailed into the 19th-century, when it was finally snapped by the recognition and removal of the apocrypha boosting the misconception. Given that subsequent use all the way to our own day maintains the reference of “Chaucer,” known also before the middle-period by the producers of the original practice, Dickie holds that it would be wrong to regard the middle period as one of reference-failure. And yet according to her reading of Evans, he is forced to accept this conclusion, as the prevailing source of information did not derive from the belief boxes of the producers.

In her second counter-example, she describes her own mistaken use of the name “Rio Ferdinand” as if it were the name of a football (soccer) team rather than that of a particular player, and her subsequent build-up of information in her “Rio Ferdinand”-file that derives from producer’s beliefs. According to her intuition, the reference of “Rio Ferdinand” should fail in her uses, which she counts as a strike against the sufficiency of Evans’ conditions, supposing that he must maintain reference here.

10. Now, I agree that the little Evans says about the informational adequacy of consumer participation leaves him open to such charges, which must be addressed by anyone attempting to defend at least some version of his account. But before turning to that, I would like to quickly query the textual warrant for Dickie’s reading here.

The point of this passage is to suggest the general kind of circumstances that would allow for consumer participation in the practice. A speaker’s information around a name points in the direction of the practice which he wishes to join. And that can be enough to secure reference, as discussed in the case of parasitic consumerism. A participating consumer is one who can go beyond this on the basis of the adequacy of his information, which, in this passage, Evans characterizes as ‘deriving’ from those speakers responsible for introducing the name to potential future participant.

So the first takeaway concerns how to situate a speaker in relation to a relevant practice, considering whether the source of her information ‘derives’ from the

practice. Now admittedly, more needs to be said about this relation than Evans does here. But before turning to that momentarily, it is important to note, first, that there is no claim here requiring the information to come from what producer's *believe*, rather than what they might merely associate; second, no suggestion that the information must come from producers at all, rather than participating consumers in good standing; third, whatever an adequate condition amounts to, there is no reason to attribute to Evans anything as strong as necessary and sufficient conditions for reference.³¹

Nevertheless, she is basically right about the need to enlarge on the conditions of adequacy for consumer information. As Evans does not elaborate on what this is, it creates an opening to speculate on what those conditions are and then provide challenging counter-examples to them. And so any attempt to maintain the insights of Evans must take up Dickie's challenge.

11. Practice as Rational Ground of Information

What is it, then, for a consumer's information to stand in a suitable reference-preserving relation to a practice? Or: how does information anchor a fixed reference, such that a consumer can enter a practice as a consumer? What we have to go on from Evans is the promising suggestion that speakers intend by their uses of a name to join the practice of those speakers whose use of the name the novice name-user derives his associations with it. We already know, *contra* descriptivism, that the relation is not one of satisfaction. And *contra* Kripke, it includes more than his recursive referential intention does, allowing Evans to address "Madagascar" in a way Kripke cannot. Moreover, as I just stressed above, *contra* Dickie, I see no reason to attribute to Evans the view that the information must derive from producers' beliefs, or even mere associations; nor do I see any reason to hold such a view on independent grounds.

Let us first consider the limiting case of a non-participating or 'parasitic' consumer. I think Kripke's own under-discussed example of "Nancy" suggests just such a

³¹ One point about the Evans-like view Dickie develops in response to this shortcoming. In my view, one problem with Dickie's "governance view," according to which reference is maintained by the relevant range of possible ways the referent could behave, is that seems to unwarrantedly slight the maintenance of reference in metaphorical uses, and perhaps other forms of figuration as well. The metaphorical use of what would literally be a category mistake might be meaningful in a way that depends on literal meaning. (Magidor, 2016) provides the most forceful case for this I know. And Dickie's dependence on counterfactual possibilities would seem to exclude this. Suppose the husband says, "Nancy betrayed me," or "Nancy has done me wrong." As an abstract object, Nancy has no causal impact, let alone one characteristic of an agent doing something wrong. But the figuration is not meaningless—nor is its meaning detachable from its literal meaning, as Magidor shows. So we would not want to treat this as a reference failure, the status of counterfactual impossibilities notwithstanding. It seems to me a virtue of Evans' view that by not tying referential relations essentially to possibilities of counterfactual dependence, that such cases pose no problem for him.

possibility.³² A mathematician and his colleagues bestow “Nancy” as a name for particular lie group they have singled out.³³ Overhearing her husband speak suggestively about a certain Nancy on the phone generates a note of suspicion in his wife, leading her to believe that “Nancy” is the name of a particular adulterous lover of her husband’s. She thus possesses a general reference-preserving intention, which allows her to pinpoint the practice she intends to be participating in, and thus the semantic reference (if any) her uses of “Nancy” could have. Put simply, she wishes to join the “Nancy” practice her husband is engaging in by his uses of the name. To be sure, her wildly wayward associations with the name would likely make any attempted use on their basis unrecognizable as competent uses of the name. Consequently, she cannot add information to practice, or sustain reference by their on the strength of her associations. Rather, the rational relation to the reference consists solely in her intention to participate in the practice from which she encounters the name and seeks to use accordingly. The possibility of her preserving the reference of “Nancy,” then, turns on reference remaining tied to producer’s knowledge by the speaker’s intention to participate in the practice from which she acquires the name. Within this severely circumscribed range, she might be able to use the name with this reference, even as she cannot understand the reference it preserves.³⁴

Reference could remain in place, provided that the speaker does not allow outside information to undercut her intention to join the practice. This happens when she begins to use the name with information derived outside the practice, and which does not, by sheer accident, provide a rational point of contact with it. Reference falters when the non-participating consumer begins to use the name illicitly, as it were, drawing on information rationally removed from the practice. Still, the speaker might maintain reference as long as her use is limited to “I wonder who/what Nancy is” or repeating what she heard from within the practice: “Nancy is elegant.” Reference remains intact in these cases because the associated information, deriving from the practice, does not unmoor the rational tie to its reference. But if she goes on to use the name, laboring under the misconception that it is a name of a particular woman with whom her husband is having an affair, these uses threaten to sever the relation to the practice. This information cannot support reference, as it bears no relevant rational tie to the practice. And so in acting on such an association, the speaker undoes the tenuous tie to the practice by exceeding the limited epistemic license it permits.

³² And connects up with his further elaboration of the social character of naming in Kripke (1986).

³³ They can fundamentally identify it as the unique possessor of certain mathematical properties....

³⁴ Another way to think about the structure of the wife’s situation is in terms of ...On the basis of socio-linguistic investigations into the processes of name formation, John Carroll, proposes that “designing a name” is “really a complex sort of problem-solving activity” (Carroll, 1985:20). Applied to the case of “Nancy,” we can regard the speaker’s inability to add information to the practice as an aspect of an inability to thus put the name to use in any of the problem-solving activities it was designed to subserve.

Such information is intrinsically incapable of supporting reference, as it is rationally unrelated to the producer's knowledge that fixes it. As this information allows no opening for competent participation, the speaker cannot justifiably add it to the practice. But acting only under the general intention maintains the rational link, insofar as it does not threaten it with information incapable of supporting reference. In associating the name with rationally unrelated information, and then proceeding to use the name on that basis, she severs the tie through the intrusion of information incapable of preserving reference. In using "Nancy" as if it named an adulterous lover of her husband's, she undoes her entitlement to reference provided by the general intention alone. In effect, she attempts to impose outside information on the practice without any justification from within. This creates a clash between the informational content of the general intention and the information intrinsically at odds with its fulfillment. She cannot both maintain reference to the lie group, as her basis predication with "Nancy" turns on treating its referent as a certain woman. As such information lacks any relevant rational relation to the practice, it is poised to undo it.

In sum, Evans' later (10.4) point about the opportunity of use without understanding allows us to advert to the mere intention to participate in a practice as grounds for the preservation of reference. This link can remain in place, provided it is not undercut by the speaker's intention to use the name with further referential intentions, which she foists on her use by information unconstrained by practice. If her use is limited to information that does derive from the practice—like hearing her husband describe Nancy as elegant—her utterance of "Nancy is elegant" need not threaten her reference as it is tied to practice. She might even go further and wonder whether Nancy is a woman, while still preserving reference. Even though this piece of information is extraneous and irrelevant to the practice, she is not yet using the name as if this information was effectively relevant to the determination of reference. So in these instances too I see no reason to deny her reference, even in the face of wholesale absence of understanding, thought, and action guided by recognition of the right referent. That said, if in laboring under the misconception that Nancy is a woman, she begins to use "Nancy" accordingly, she undoes her rational link to the reference.

The limiting case of parasitic consumerism, where the speaker's intention to join the practice responsible for the placement of the name in her own lexicon, provides a baseline for the object of producer's knowledge. This situation is precarious, however, as the use of the name with extraneous information is liable to disrupt the baseline connection. The reason is that the information retailed in such uses provides no point of contact with the practice. As it does not come from the practice, or furnish a rational link to it by chance, such use could not constitute competent participation within the practice. And so it cannot transmit information about the reference of "Nancy," as there is nothing to tie such outside information to it.³⁵

³⁵ The case of "Nancy" might lead one to suppose that reference-preserving rational relations are constrained by the avoidance of 'category errors'. As I indicated in the note above, this need not be

12. As we have seen, there are generally two types of ways that a consumer is introduced into a practice. An explicit introduction, where another user of the name teaches it to the speaker with "NN is F" or "NN is the F" or simply hearing a snatch of conversation in which the name is used, "NN is G." And as I stressed above in discussing Kripke, the descriptions that facilitate fixation and individual acquisition do not themselves constitute descriptive conditions for the determination of reference. Learning "Pluto" by hearing an informative utterance of "Pluto is a planet in our solar system" need not make this description a condition for the reference of "Pluto" itself. After the discovery that Pluto is not in fact a planet, its reference remains untouched because being a planet is not a constitutive condition for reference.

To take another example, a speaker could be introduced to someone with "John is Jill's husband," even if this turns out to be false. The reason is that satisfying "Jill's husband" is not a constitutive condition of reference for "John." It is not constitutive of the referent of "John" that "John" is just a name for whoever is Jill's husband. Rather, being Jill's husband is a claim—a hypothesis, if you like—entertained here by a potential consumer about the referent of "John." Later learning that John is not in fact Jill's husband, he has no reason to act as if John is no longer a name for a relevant person. Suppose at this point he has collected other information in his "John"-file (F, G, H, etc.). Now he has reason to remove "Jill's husband" from it, to be sure, but he does not, on that account, have any reason to remove the others (assuming their status does not essentially turn on the relation to the property of being Jill's husband). So the referent of "John" remains the same as the information associated with the bearer undergoes some revision, with a revised file emerging that characterizes the referent of "John" as F, G, H, etc.—just not Jill's husband. The reason, again, is that the illimitable pieces of information a speaker associates with a name are not constitutive conditions for the fixation of reference. Their general role is to facilitate reference and understanding, in context, but not to constitute a condition for its fixation across contexts in its own right. That is sealed by producer's knowledge in action. Once in place, the role of all subsequently accumulated information is to reinforce reference by tying it to the producer's knowledge that fixes it.

13. Now Marco Polo's acquisition of "Madagascar" came packaged with a bundle of information, all of which is true of the coastal area around Mogadishu, and none of

the case at least in certain instances of figuration. But even outside of it, the move does not seem to me to be mandatory. Imagine a point in the not-too-distant future when robots could behave indistinguishably from humans, at least some of the time. The categorical distinctions between animate and inanimate objects, and persons and non-persons, has been treated as fundamental as ontological categories in the history of Western metaphysics up to the present day. See, e.g. (Strawson, 1959), among countless others. But I see no reason to rule out reference to such a robot by a speaker who mistakes it for a human being—provided that the information she does possess places her in a suitable rational relation to some significant segment of the practice.

which has ever been true of the island country called “Madagascar.”³⁶ In receiving an introduction to the name by means of this information, he intends to join the practice which is its source. There is no reason why we should regard the information in his introduction any differently than we would an ordinary consumer. Just as there would be no reason for the speaker above to treat the reference of “John” as if it stood or failed according to its unique satisfaction of “being Jill’s husband”—rather than a potential piece of information or misinformation about the referent of “John”—there is no reason for Marco Polo to do so.

We should instead recognize Marco Polo and his linguistic descendants leading up to the discovery of the island as consumers in the original practice. As their intention to participate in the relevant practice turns on the source of information provided to them in learning “Madagascar,” this can point to the only relevant practice. Deciding whether they are participating or non-participating consumers in general, I leave as an open issue, because it makes no difference to their standing with respect to the first practice. At a minimum, they are parasitic consumers, to the extent that they wish to join the practice from which their use of the name originates. And they are participants, however limitedly, to the extent that this information is rationally related to that practice. While their understanding is markedly incomplete or absent altogether, they can maintain reference by the rational link between their intention to join a particular practice and the condition that fixes the reference of it.

Following the discovery, a new “Madagascar” emerges through the activity of speakers who now know an object in a way that their European predecessors beginning with Marco Polo could not, and go on to collect information through direct encounters with the island and their communication about it, all filed under “Madagascar.” Reference shifts when the information that derives from island and its practice comes to outweigh information derived from the mainland and its practice. Even if we suppose, as seems very likely, that all the information Marco Polo recorded comes from the first practice, and suppose further that this is all retained by the producers of the new practice, it will not be too long after the discovery and the subsequent dealings with what they regard as the reference of “Madagascar” for new information to displace the old. At this point, all information culled in connection with “Madagascar” is treated as answerable to the new reference alone. The information from the old dossier can no longer support the original reference, because it is displaced by the new information coming from the new practice. And as a matter of contingent historical fact, whether Marco Polo’s information is retained by the producers of the new practice or not, it was at no point true of the island, while it was of the mainland. So its diminishing value and utility in interactions with the new reference of “Madagascar” suggest that it will not be in circulation for long. Once more: to say that preservation of reference depends on the relation between the information that surrounds it, and the producer’s

³⁶ Room (1997)

knowledge which constitutes the condition that fixes it, is not to say that any piece of information is essential for the fixation of reference, rather than that bodies of information and misinformation support reference, insofar as they maintain rational relations to the condition that does fix it, by virtue of having that practice as its source or rational ground.

My view, then, is that the adequacy of consumer's information is a matter of its rational relation to producer's knowledge, measured in context, according to its capacity to put speakers on the path to participation. For a consumer to stand in an appropriate reference-preserving relation to a fixed referent in her use of a name, the information she draws on in using the name, with the intention to be participating in the practice from which she derives this information, must place her in a rational relation to the practice in which the bearer of the name she uses is fixed by the standards of producers' knowledge. The adequacy of her information hinges, then, on its maintaining a rational point of contact with producer's knowledge.

The informational relations I have in mind are those that support the rationality of reference in even the most minimal reference-preserving uses of the name. The adequacy of the relations is fundamentally a matter of their role in reinforcing the rationality of any given use. In the limiting case, the mere intention to participate can suffice because of the way it accommodates the speaker's intentional acts of utterance, or even general standing to the name prior to any use. The reason we can, at least at first, treat the wife's relation to "Nancy" as episodes or acts of reference preserving reference to the lie group is that this is the practice that fixes the relevant reference and to which the wife is rationally related by intention to participate in a practice identifiable, by both her and us, as the informational source of her undertaking "Nancy." The reason why this link is likely severed by the interference of alien information is that furnishes materials for referential intentions that override her general intention alone, by redirecting her use of the name away from the practice.

The situation of a participating consumer is one where reference is secured in the first instance in the same way it is by a non-participating consumer. But the consumer's information is such as to create the conditions for competent participation, contribute the contents of her file to the ongoing reinforcement of the community-wide reference, and thus altogether stand on much firmer ground within the practice, even as they lack themselves the reference-fixing knowledge of a producer.

I see no reason not to treat the determination of a participating consumer's reference according to the same minimal mechanism available to the parasitic consumer. Querying the adequacy of a participating consumer's information, the mere maintenance of reference in their given use is not at issue. Rather, what is at issue is the adequacy of their information in the reinforcement of reference subsequent to its fixation. The parasitic consumer's information is constitutionally unsuited to such a task. And although their mere intention can do trick, it is

eminently liable to be undercut by the intrusion of extraneous information. It seems extremely unlikely then that a community of parasitic consumers alone—possessing either no information, or only outside information, other than the information that allows them to direct their intentions to this or that practice—could maintain reference.

So what is at stake now is the information that allows a consumer to be a competent participant in the practice, receiving and transmitting information answerable to the referent of the name, and capable of reinforcing this reference by virtue of being thus tied to the object of the producer's knowledge. The conditions for this are contextually variable, with the information that enables entry into one area of a practice and another sometimes effectively segregated from each other. It seems that all that can be proffered as way to gauge the adequacy of a consumer's information in enabling competent participation and the reinforcement of reference it provides, is the effective exercise of a capacity for thought and talk involving the name, relative to a context of use, in the intelligent production and reception of thoughts encompassing the range of propositional attitudes, recognizable as the expression of thoughts about the individual known to the producers of the practice as the bearer of the name.³⁷

In Dickie's "Chaucer" example, these consumers were able to reach the original reference, despite the distance of the sources of the bulk of their descriptions from the producers. We can see this whether we view them as participating or non-participating consumers. If they are the latter, then their uses preserve reference, provided it is not undercut by alien information. Despite the salience of their wayward information, we can place them within the practice on two grounds.

First, if nothing else, their general, parasitic intention to participate in the practice they can identify as the source of their information places them in just a short chain of communication away from speakers whose information directed them to the same practice, issuing at some point in the transfer of information from producers. So although we suppose no producer is the source of their faulty conception, they are but a short chain of communication away from consumers who did have producers' information as their introduction. Second, this outside information does nothing to undercut some other fundamental pieces of information at their disposal, such as "man" and "author." To see the weight of this, consider a contemporary speaker introduced to the "Chaucer"-practice with these two pieces of information alone. His general intention to participate would then point him to a practice that determines the reference of "Chaucer" as Chaucer, enjoying at least status as a parasitic consumer, and contributing to the ongoing reinforcement of reference by the prominent place his two meager pieces of information occupy in the original practice.

³⁷ This echoes the formulation of the view I label "McDowell's Measure" in the next chapter. See McDowell (1977).

Regarding the reference of “Rio Ferdinand”, we can first ask whether Dickie fails to refer, as she takes herself to, because the information removes the rational relations she can preserve through parasitic consumerism. As the core of her introduction derives directly from producer’s beliefs, it might be that her radical misrecognition of the nature of the reference is offset by the rational force of these. On the other hand, they would begin to be threatened by her introduction to other information of her own. Even here, it might be passable to the extent that it does not disrupt the rest, which would ultimately be decided by its rational relevance. These considerations are not meant to settle the question of reference in this case, as any adequate answer would have to draw on more details particular to the case than are available. What matters in any case is that there is no need forced by these examples to reject Evans’ view. Better then to posthole here, then, than to indulge in more intuition-mongering.

THE SEMANTICS OF A PROPER NAME

*Now I see what there is in a name, a word, liquid, sane, unruly, musical,
self-sufficient*

Walt Whitman

1. Introduction

The topic of the present chapter is the semantic content of a proper name. To avoid the traps of Millianism and Descriptivism, I do not presume a place for either the referent or a description in the content of a proper name. Rather, I begin by placing proper names in the wider context of intentional acts of utterance. The upshot of this section is the way that the *de re* status of a proper name—its being object-dependent and unmediated—informs its correlative conditions for truth and understanding. As this is a broad structural feature common to singular terms as such, the topic of the next section is Evans' approach to distinct singular contents. After this point, the stage is set for examining what is special about the content of a proper name—a theme I develop centrally in terms of the *rational powers* distinctive of possession of one. Issues of individuation and speaker reference occupy the rest.

2. Acting on an Understanding³⁸

Human linguistic communication is a species of intentional action. Making sense of an action, whether in the linguistic case or generally, crucially involves recognizing the agent's own perspective in so acting. As is much discussed, actions are intentional or rational 'under' some descriptions but not others.³⁹ Reports which bring out the point or purpose of the action, by the agent's own lights, will capture the intentional content of the action. Apprehending why an agent undertook a certain action depends, then, on uncovering the reasons why she acted so. In the linguistic case, we want to know why, in this sense, a competent speaker engaged in a certain speech act. If we treated linguistic understanding as a purely practical ability—say, merely as the exercise of a capacity to use words by the standards of conventional usage⁴⁰—its intentional character would be rendered out of reach. If the intentional character of language use rules out approaches like these—which might, without obvious injustice, be labeled "behaviorist"—appeals to an agent's knowledge of her own action appear unavoidable in finding a faithful specification of its content.

One way to broach the question of understanding a proper name, then, is to ask: 'what can someone who understands a name *do* that someone who lacks an

³⁸ I borrow this expression from McDowell (2002)

³⁹ Anscombe (1959) and Davidson (1984b) are the two pillars of modern inquiry.

⁴⁰ Soames (1987). Having previously argued that Soames' Millian stance commits him to psychologism about meaning, it is an interesting question how this might connect with what seems to me to be his behaviorism about understanding. I plan to address this in forthcoming writing. For further discussion see Heck (2006).

understanding of it cannot?' At bottom, the capacity to think and talk about an object by means of its given name is what separates those who know the name from those who do not. How shall we thus gauge understanding a proper name? We stand to profit, I propose, by approaching it in terms suggested by John McDowell in his landmark paper, "On the Sense and Reference of a Proper Name."⁴¹ For the sake of convenience, I label the following characterization, "McDowell's Measure." By the standards it sets, the fundamental difference between a speaker who can deploy a name with understanding and a speaker who cannot pivots on the ability of the former but not the latter to produce and respond routinely to "NN"-utterances that make them intelligible as speech acts expressing thoughts and attitudes about the actual referent of the name (relative to context). A speaker who understands "Hesperus" can use it in utterances to express thoughts, encompassing the range of propositional attitudes, about the bearer of that name—the planet Venus—and respond similarly to its competent employment by fellow speakers. She can use "Hesperus" in utterances that are intelligible, in the light of her environment and other propositional attitudes, as expressing thoughts about that particular object.

Consider a competent speaker's sentential utterance of "Hesperus is visible." Why might she have done this? One good possibility, realizable generally in cases of literal speech, is that she uttered that sentence in order to say that Hesperus is visible.⁴² Of course, a full justification for this simple specification would also advert to aspects of the speaker's physical and social environment and certain of her propositional attitudes relevant to that context of utterance. Those further details aside for now, this intentional characterization of her speech act would not be available if we could not attribute knowledge of her action, on those terms, to her. In order for the speaker to view her utterance of "p" as her saying that p, she must intend to say that p by uttering "p." And the availability of that intention hinges on her understanding—her knowledge that an utterance of "p," in an appropriate context, can be used to say that p.⁴³ In this way, an utterance of "Hesperus is visible" becomes recognizable as, say, the speaker asserting and expressing her belief that Hesperus is visible.

By contrast, someone who lacked any name for an object x, knowing x only insofar as he has enjoyed perceptual encounters with it, and perhaps also being able to re-identify it on this basis, should not be expected to behave as someone who knows "NN" would. He might be able to express thoughts about x demonstratively, as in "That is f," and respond with understanding to others' such utterances. But this does

⁴¹ McDowell (1977)

⁴² I am assuming that it is possible for a speaker to utter a sentence simply with the intention of saying what the sentence semantically expresses; i.e., sometimes we merely mean what we say. This point is compatible with the idea that extra-semantic, or broadly contextual features always play a necessary role in yielding a complete characterization of a speech act.

⁴³ Cases of misunderstanding do not undermine the basic point. Suppose a speaker mistakenly believes that a certain predicate 'f' means 'g'. Intentional characterizations of her 'f'-talk still depend on her mistaken semantic beliefs. Attributions of semantic knowledge are generally warranted when a speaker's understanding is correct.

not in itself automatically afford him the capacity to employ and respond to any name for *x* with understanding.

To summarize: appeals to an agent's knowledge of her own actions in general renders those actions recognizable as the intentional acts they are. Linguistic action in particular is likewise recognizable under descriptions which rely crucially on the speaker's semantic knowledge (*inter alia*). And in the specific case of sentential utterances containing proper names, understanding a proper name pivots partly on the participants' knowledge that a certain name stands for the relevant extra-linguistic item.

3. How might this look in the case of singular terms in general and proper names in particular? In communication, their basic role, *qua* unmodified singular referring expressions, is to indicate the relevant particular. When speaking sincerely and literally, this will characterize a competent speaker's intentions in uttering a sentence containing a name, as it equally will a competent audience's successful comprehension of it. Schematically, a speaker, *S*, uttering an atomic sentence formed by coupling a name, "NN," with a monadic predicate, "*f*," will succeed in communicating the thought that NN is *f* to an audience, *A*, if *S*'s utterance of "NN is *f*" prompts *A* to think of NN to the effect that it is *f*. It appears, then, that successful communication of singular statement relies on the ability of both speaker and audience to identify the reference of the name.⁴⁴

Similarly, understanding an utterance of "You smoke" requires recognizing the intended audience as the referent of "you." Merely knowing the linguistic meaning, or character of the pronoun "you" in English—that it is conventionally used to indicate the person the speaker is addressing⁴⁵—is insufficient for understanding. Assuming conformity with conventional usage, every utterance of "You smoke" has this feature in common. It does not distinguish any utterance of that sentence from another. In hearing an utterance of "You smoke," there is always a gap between knowing that in uttering that sentence a speaker intends to say of whomever she is addressing that he or she smokes, on the one hand, and knowing who that is, on the other. If *I* am the intended referent, I fail to understand the speaker if I treat her utterance as saying that *you* smoke, and vice versa. Plainly, it is one thing for the speaker to be addressing me, another thing to be addressing you, and yet another to be addressing someone else in the room. As the truth or falsity of any utterance of that sentence depends upon who "you" refers to in that context of utterance, understanding requires identifying the right referent of "you."

Another example is the first-person singular. The vocable "I" in English is typically used as an indexical pronoun for identifying the speaker as the referent of an "I"-utterance on any given use. And again, there is a clear gap between knowing that "I am *F*" is true iff the speaker (whoever that is) is *F*, and knowing who the speaker is.

⁴⁴ See Strawson (1964).

⁴⁵ The kind of thing that could be employed as a Kaplanian character.

Hearing “I am F” in a noisy, crowded room, not knowing who is speaking, I do not know whether *she* is F, *he* is F, *she over there* is F, *he in that corner* is F, and so on. For any utterance of the form, it is one thing to know that he is F, another that she is F. Until this is known, there is no usable understanding of an utterance of “I am F.” An audience does not know what follows from it, what the speaker has committed himself or herself to, or what she could be in a position to assert by uttering “He is F” or “She is F” on the basis of it. We are thus unable to connect “I” to any other information we might have, or be thus equipped to gather, about the intended referent. Further, we are unable to act on the content of the utterance—what an understanding of it would impart. If I need to know who is F in order to act on that identification, hearing “I am F” but merely knowing that someone—the speaker, whoever that is— said that he or she is F, does not give me the relevant information I need to act on. If, however I could perceptually identify the speaker as a certain man to my right, such that I could demonstratively identify him and express it as “He is F”, then I could understand what it is for him to be F. But understanding what it is for an utterer of “I” to be F is quite detached from understanding this particular utterance and the inferential implications and action potential that understanding imports.⁴⁶

The same basic point applies to proper names as well. Understanding that a sentence of the form “NN is F” is one which says of the bearer of “NN” that he/she/it is F does not impart an understanding of any given utterance of it. That is simply to know something about the kind of expression employed, rather than to understand its occurrence in a particular utterance. Given any (non-empty) name “NN,” one can, purely in virtue of treating it as such, know that it is a name for the bearer of “NN.” But that triviality does not itself enable understanding any more than knowing that “you” stands for the speaker’s addressee enables understanding of a particular utterance of the form “You are F.” There will always be a gap between knowing that, in uttering “NN is F,” the speaker is saying that a particular object called “NN” is F, and knowing which object is F.

Given that the primary function of singular terms is to indicate which thing the speaker is talking about, knowledge of the conventional role of a demonstrative, indexical, or proper name is plainly insufficient for this task. By contrast, understanding utterances of various kinds of non-singular sentences, such as an utterance of the quantified sentence “Some woman is wise,” does not require identifying a particular woman in a way that understanding “She is wise” or “Simone is wise” does. Understanding the first is achievable by the hearer knowing that what the speaker said is true iff some woman is wise. This only involves competence with the English quantifier “some” combined with the general term “woman.” The speaker need not have a particular woman in mind; and even if she does, the hearer need not identify that woman in order to understand the remark. But when confronted with an utterance of the second or third sentence, understanding

⁴⁶ In adopting this approach, I align myself with an approach to understanding that Heck (2002) helpfully labels “rational engagement.” See Evans (1982: Ch.10), Dummett (1995: Ch.4), Heck (1995).

requires an identification of the unique referent of “she” or “Simone” in its given use for a particular individual. As I stressed, understanding what it is for some woman to be wise is one thing, and understanding what it is for *she* to be wise, quite another. When all a hearer knows is something about the term “she”—that it is some particular female the speaker intends to refer to—that does effectively amount to anything more than what is known in understanding “Some female is wise.” The ability to understand that sentence does not itself afford an understanding of the singular content expressed by a particular utterance “She is wise”, any more than “Some woman is wise” does.

Because understanding an utterance of “Some woman is wise” need not involve identifying any particular woman, it need not increase the store of information I associate with a particular woman, or enable the inferences and actions that come with identifying reference. In understanding that *she* is F, I add to my store of information about *her*. Having thought of her previously as G, H, J, etc, but not F, I can decide to add this to my store of information as well. Or I could decide not to, which just as much requires knowing who she is. I might suppose this what the speaker is saying is false because she cannot be both F and G and I know she is G. But the decision to associate or dissociate a piece of information with a particular individual depends in the first place on my identification of that individual as the relevant referent of “she” in this context. If I think that if she is G, then she is F, and now combine that with the thought that she is F, I can infer that she is G. If I am supposed to act in a certain way once I know that *she* is F, I cannot so act unless, in understanding an utterance of “She is F,” I know who she is.

4. Divergences in the truth-conditions of these two kinds of utterances are correlative with divergences in understanding and the rational power understanding imports. As understanding a quantified sentence like “Some woman is wise” does not depend on the ability of speaker or hearer to pick out a particular individual, its possession of truth-conditions is independent of whether any object satisfies “some woman” or not in this context.

When an utterance of “Some woman is F” is true, it is so in virtue of at least one woman being F. But it is also equally true when more than one woman is F. If it is false, it is not because “some woman” stands for a particular person and she is not F, any more than “No woman is F” is false in virtue of “No woman” standing for some strange entity—*no woman*—such that it is not F. Rather, its falsity consists in no woman being F. On the other side, an utterance of “She is F” is true iff the relevant referent of “she”—the particular female intended by the speaker—is F, false iff *she* is not F. The truth-conditions of the singular statement require the existence of the one and only one relevant referent of “she” as used in the utterance. If “she” is empty on this occasion, there is a truth-value gap. The sentence uttered is neither true nor false. For its truth requires that she be F as its falsity requires that she not be F, neither of which are available when “she” fails to refer. By contrast, the falsity of “Some woman is F” requires the opposite—no woman being F.

Let us say, then, that the occurrence of an expression in an utterance of a sentence is a singular term or referring expression when it is true or false just in case the object it refers to satisfies the predicate with which it is concatenated or not.⁴⁷ The truth-conditions of an utterance of an atomic sentence formed from a singular term “t” and monadic⁴⁸ predicate “is F”—“t is F”—essentially depends on the existence of an object capable of being the referent of “t” in that context. Determining whether an expression “t” as it occurs in a sentential utterance of the form “t is F” is singular or not turns on whether understanding what the speaker said—that t is F—is a thought essentially reliant on the existence of t, i.e. the thought which is true iff t is F. If a singular term is empty, the sentences employing it will express no truth-evaluable content. And there is nothing that could count as understanding utterances containing it. For there is simply no singular thought expressed by the utterance that one could entertain in understanding it. Accordingly the fundamental communicative function of singular terms cannot be carried out either.

These correlative conditions of truth and understanding can be brought to bear in testing whether the given use of an expression in grammatical subject position, in a sentence with subject-predicate superficial grammar, is a singular term or not.⁴⁹ That quantifiers do not meet either condition is clear from the contrasting conditions of truth and understanding in the case of the quantified sentences discussed above. As a device of quantification, the fundamental function and utility of a quantifier expression is not to refer to objects. As a referential device, a singular term does derive its fundamental function only to the extent that an utterance containing the term is capable of executing it—provided a pertinent contextual apparatus, to be discussed below, is in place. An utterance of “Some woman is F” has clearly formulable truth-conditions, independently of any object satisfying the quantifier expression. Correlatively, understanding such sentences do not involve identifying an object, but rather is met simply by understanding the specification “some woman” (along with “is F”). By contrast, an utterance of “She is F” has no truth-conditions when “she” has no object, and there is nothing that could count as understanding it. The different conditions of truth and understanding between the quantified and singular sentences point toward the different cognitive and communicative purposes that quantification and reference serve.

Whether definite descriptions should be treated as quantifiers or singular terms continues to be controversial. In any case, definite descriptions do not pass this test. Understanding the definite description in, e.g., “The President of the United States smokes” is achievable by understanding the individual words that compose it in its characteristic way. Here understanding is independent of knowing which individual (if any) might answer to the description. Moreover, merely understanding the description, even in the context of its occurrence in a variety of sentences, need not itself reveal the identity of the individual potentially answering to it. So the relation

⁴⁷ This is a way of stating the Russellian notion of singular reference in Russell (1905)

⁴⁸ Being monadic is inessential.

⁴⁹ Having the surface form of a singular term is neither necessary or sufficient.

in which the description stands to a (possible) object is that of satisfaction; e.g. “the President of the United States” is related to some suitable object—and only if one exists at all—in virtue of its uniquely satisfying the description. To the extent that a thought expressed by coupling a definite description, in the position of grammatical subject, with a predicate concerns a particular object at all, the relation between thought and object is essentially indirect—in virtue of the intermediary descriptive content. The upshot is that one can entertain the thought expressed by “The President of the United States smokes” without identifying any particular object answering to that description. Moreover, that thought is available independently of whether any object satisfies the description or not, *tout court*.⁵⁰

The conditions of truth and understanding characteristic of thoughts expressed by utterances employing a pure definite description are quite unlike those exemplified proper names and other singular terms. The truth-conditions of “The President of the United States smoke” are clearly formulable independently of existence. We can understand what it would be for something to satisfy the description in “The President of the United States smoke” even if nothing does. It is intelligible to anyone who understands the constituent words in this arrangement—irrespective of the further knowledge of whether or not any object answers to the description. If nothing does, the intelligibility of sentences containing it remains unchanged; the sentence is merely false.

5. The way we target an object in particular episodes of thought expressible by a definite description in the role of grammatical subject must be different from the way we target an object in thoughts that are not related to their objects in virtue of uniquely satisfying a specification. Unlike a definite description, understanding a singular term, like “that man,” “I,” or “Obama,” is not intelligible in terms of antecedently intelligible parts. And given the irreducibility of singular terms to descriptions, understanding any given one cannot consist in knowing any description or specification that determines reference by way of unique satisfaction.⁵¹

All that understanding can consist of is knowing which object bears that name—and this is essentially unavailable if the object does not exist. It is unlike the sense of a description in this way; for a descriptive sense does not depend essentially for its intelligibility on the existence of an object. We can understand what it would be for something to satisfy the description “the brightest object in the night sky,” even if nothing does. We cannot understand a proper name short of knowing which object the name stands for. I cannot understand an utterance of “Phosphorus is visible”

⁵⁰ In this last sentence I take the Russellian line, pace Strawson (1950), who ties the availability of such thoughts to the existence of an object satisfying the description. This is consistent with the fundamental claim that such thoughts are essentially mediated.

⁵¹ In addition to Kripke’s arguments for the irreducibility of names to descriptions, Anscombe (1959: 41-44) Wiggins (1965) Marcus (1967), Donnellan (1970), McDowell (1977), Evans (1982: Ch.2) For demonstratives and indexicals, Kaplan (1977/1989), Perry (1977, 1979), and Lewis (1979b) are influential.

when I am ignorant of the contribution made by that name to the conditions under which that sentence is correctly or incorrectly asserted. Like understanding sentences containing other singular terms such as demonstratives and indexicals, one can understand the sentence-type as a competent speaker of the language. But one cannot on that basis alone understand any particular utterance of that sentence. The sentence “He is fearsome” can be uttered in myriad contexts, relative to countless assignments of the referent of “he.” To understand the content of any utterance of it, one must know what would make an assertion of it correct or incorrect—and there is no way of doing that short of knowing who “he” is on any given occasion. Understanding the sentence-type itself provides no way of distinguishing the content of one utterance of it from another. If, however, this use of the indexical pronoun “he” is in fact empty, the speaker expresses no singular proposition. And since understanding the utterance requires identifying the relevant referent of “she,” when there is no such referent to be identified at all, there is nothing that could count as understanding, no truth-conditions, no singular reference or thought.

Understanding a singular term, then, is distinct from non-singular terms in not singling the object out by means of any description or specification, and thereby being existence-dependent on the same ground. Proper names equally illustrate the point. Suppose, for instance, that I intend to assert that Obama smokes by uttering the sentence “Obama smokes” in a context suitable for saying just that. That is, a context in which “Obama” at least purports to be used as name for a particular individual, say, the current U.S. president. Then what I say is true iff Obama smokes; false iff Obama does not smoke. Either way, I am able to entertain the singular thought expressible by uttering “Obama smokes” in virtue of the given use of “Obama” in this referential context being a proper name I know for a particular individual.

Now suppose instead the context is one where “Obama” is in fact empty—say, an expression for a character in Kenyan mythology I mistake as a proper name for a historical person. Then there is nothing susceptible of being true or false in the first place, no singular reference whatsoever to be made. If there is nothing strictly and literally to be said by uttering such a sentence at all, there is nothing that could count as understanding it. In attempting an assertion of “Obama smokes” I intend to say something true or false depending on how the things stand with a particular object—the relevant referent of “Obama.” An utterance of “Obama smokes” could not amount to any such assertion at all, when there is no relevant object to be referred to. In such cases, the possibility of understanding the utterance vanishes, leaving me merely with the mistaken belief that I said something I have only the illusion of having said.

Just as my attempted assertion failed in the absence of the object required for singular reference, so too is the judgment which would have had a singular thought as its content unmasked as empty. The potential for singular reference and thought rests on the existence of the relevant intended object. In this example, my capacity

to think of Obama presupposes his existence, as does my capacity to refer to him. If I take myself to be judging that Obama smokes, then I aspire toward a judgment whose content is that Obama smokes. If there is no such thing, then there is simply nothing expressed by the utterance such that it smokes. Intending to express this thought-attempt, my utterance of “Obama smokes” expresses no truth-evaluable content. There is nothing referred to by “Obama” in the context of this utterance, or any others like it in containing an empty name, such that it smokes or not. The availability of such an attempted thought requires truth-conditions for the utterance aimed at giving expression to it. Absent the objective circumstances necessary for its being truth-evaluable at all—the existence of the relevant object—there is nothing that could count as understanding those utterances containing the name. There is no thought available to be entertained, and so nothing for the utterance containing the name to express. The identity of the thought depends essentially on there being something which that thought is about, as the identity of what is said by uttering a sentence containing a term for the putative object of thought depends on the existence of such an object for it to be truth-evaluable. For the price of a name’s semantic and cognitive immediacy is that names which turn out to be bearerless *ipso facto* have no object to contribute to the truth-conditions of sentences containing it. Since the semantic content of a name is exhausted by standing for its bearer, the absence of an object implies the absence of a thought.

6. Proper names share this immediacy with other singular terms, like demonstratives and indexicals. Recall the speaker above whose lexicon contains no name for an object he knows only insofar as he can perceptually identify it and express demonstrative thoughts about it, such as “That is visible.” Unlike definite descriptions, the thought expressed need not rest on the speaker’s standing association of “that” with some condition or specification. Suppose the object of his thought is Venus. In saying “That is visible,” he stands in a similar position to the speaker who says “Hesperus is visible.” In both cases, each subject expresses a thought about the same object, without needing to secure their reference by identifying the name or demonstrative with descriptive conditions specifying its range of reference. Proper names and demonstratives, then, are similar as devices of singular reference, but distinct nevertheless in their operations—with the demonstrative in this case essentially tied to the perceptible presence of the object.⁵²

If it is correct to distinguish proper names from definite descriptions, on the one hand, and from other kinds of singular terms, like demonstratives, on the other, the question still remains. What is the characteristic way of thinking expressed by a proper name? Like demonstratives and indexicals, but unlike definite descriptions, proper names are unmediated and *de re* (object-dependent). The speaker above with no names who utters “That is visible” while pointing to Venus, and the speaker who knows “Hesperus” as a name for that very same object and utters “Hesperus is

⁵² Among other differences addressed below.

visible,” both express unmediated, de re thoughts predicating the same property of one and the same object.

Nevertheless, let us not yet conclude that the thoughts expressed must be the same. Where might the difference lie? Suppose we were to report the non-name-user’s utterance in terms of the name. “Why did he utter ‘That is visible?’” — “In order to say that Hesperus is visible.” Now, the applicability of this report is quite limited. It can only be made by someone capable of identifying the speaker’s demonstrative reference as “Hesperus”; it is only immediately comprehensible to audiences who know “Hesperus”; and, therefore, it will not be a description that the speaker himself could use to describe his speech act. This leads us to ask whether the name-report could count as an intentional description of the speaker’s demonstrative utterance. If the value of an intentional description is in capturing the agent’s point-of-view in so acting, it is questionable whether a description which he could not himself provide, or even understand, is up to the task. That both sentences express unmediated, de re thoughts concerning the same object and property notwithstanding, we might be able to recognize a difference in content.

Perhaps the key difference in the thoughts expressed derives from the knowledge possessed by the name-user alone. For only she knows the object by name. Querying the point of her utterance, we maintain fidelity by using her own words in reporting her speech act: “Why did she utter ‘Hesperus is visible?’” – “In order to say that Hesperus is visible.” If she’s never been in a position herself to perceptually pick out Hesperus and express a demonstrative thought about it, then the demonstrative report could fall short for her in the same way the name-report did in the other case.⁵³ The upshot is that we make the most sense of the content of the speaker’s intention in so acting by specifying it in terms characteristic of her knowledge of her own action. In this case, that will include her semantic knowledge of “Hesperus.”

When the identification of a particular object, like the planet Venus, proceeds by either proper name (“Hesperus”) or bare demonstrative (“that”), neither identification is mediated by a descriptive identification. As two singular modes of identification, unique satisfaction of some definite description does not determine the reference of a demonstrative or a proper name. All that understanding either singular term can consist of is knowing which thing the given device of singular reference has its object, perhaps relative to the context of utterance. Absent an object, the requisite materials for singular reference are nowhere to be found. So whatever knowledge distinguishes the comprehension of two singular terms for the same thing, it is not the way either relates thinkers to the objects of thought by way of unique satisfaction of a certain specification.

But plainly, understanding a proper name is one thing, and understanding a demonstrative another. This is evident above in the observation that understanding

⁵³ Differences may persist even when the name-user is acquainted with the bearer of the name, owing to differences in the two forms of referential device.

one need not itself allow for understanding the other. And the possibility of a Frege case involving simultaneous understanding of them both, while taking rationally conflicting attitudes toward them, further reinforces their difference. Differentiating them by this criterion reflects their systematic divergences in *rational power*: the distinct rational patterns in thought and action attending the semantic impact of each one respectively.

7. The larger implication is the way content is controlled by rationality. To entertain a proposition in one's own thought, or in understanding an utterance of another, is to exercise the knowledge constitutive of its rational power. In entertaining the thought expressible by an utterance of "Obama smokes" I evince the knowledge characteristic of the way of thinking expressed by "Obama", viz. the sense of "Obama." To entertain the thought that Obama smokes is to know how my thinking represents things as being.⁵⁴ For it is precisely the exercise of this knowledge that makes the rational patterns created by the intentional use of "Obama" what they are. In entertaining or understanding a proposition we must know how are thinking represents things as being, if we are to exploit these ways of thinking along any dimension of its rational power. Competent involvement in the intentional use of "Obama" requires that we know who we are thinking about in thinking about this particular person and in this way.

Singular reference, not being descriptive, can only consist of knowing who or what is the referent. But there is an ambiguity in know-wh, such that the relevant knowledge requires more than mere acquaintance with an object *x* that happens in fact, but unbeknownst to the subject, to be the reference of singular term "*t*"; it requires knowing *x* as *t*.⁵⁵ This is the propositional knowledge that would be furnished in answer to a referential question for a name, demonstrative, indexical, and perhaps also a definite description.

A subject whose knowledge of an object is limited to demonstrative identification can be said to both know the object, but also know it as the referent of a particular demonstrative identification. A speaker's ability to answer the referential question directed toward his demonstrative utterance is the way we take the measure of his knowledge-wh. Asked who he meant in an utterance of the form "That man is *F*," answering "that man" while pointing out the intended demonstratum to his interlocutor would be an adequate answer. There is no rational requirement attending competence with a demonstrative other than a subject's knowledge of a particular demonstrative identification, evidenced by such an answer to an accompanying referential question. Other forms of identification could suffice too, but only derivatively—provided that the speaker can further identify them with his demonstrative identification. They are not required. Accordingly, a demonstrative identification does not demand that the speaker also be able to identify the object in

⁵⁴ This echoes McDowell's formulation of what Evans (1982: Ch.4) dubs "Russell's Principle" in McDowell (1986).

⁵⁵ McDowell (1970, 1977).

some other way, like by name. For the rational requirements of the two are different.

So what it is to think of a particular object, to the effect that it is F, differs when the object is identified as what would be expressible, in context, as the referent of a given use of “I”, “that”, or “NN.” The fact that one thinks of a particular object that it is F, in thinking of oneself first-personally as F, is not indifferent to what one thereby thinks. To suppose otherwise would be to treat the contents of all three as the same. In that case, the essential core of content expressed by “I am F” “That is F” and “NN is F” would be the same whenever their references are, relative to the time and place of a common context of use. One would then have to overcome the obvious disparities in rational power unique to each by relegating their conditions for understanding to a place outside of content. This faces familiar and, to date, insurmountable difficulties.⁵⁶

Why not instead treat the fact that the object of one’s thought is a first-person reference, say, as potentially figuring in its content—a content distinct from those expressible by other singular modes of identification (such as, demonstrative and nominal). Disclosing the distinctive contents of distinct but co-designative *de re* senses must reflect the differences in their respective rational powers, that is at once essentially non-descriptive and object-dependent. Whatever difference each singular term makes to the content of the thought expressible by utterances containing it is the *sense* expressed by that term. And whatever form this takes, the sense of a singular term will be what is known in understanding. The task ahead of us now is to zero in on the knowledge distinctive of understanding singular terms of various kinds, other than that of unique satisfaction of a certain specification. One of the great attractions of Evans’ proposal for handling sense in terms of ways of thinking is its promise of delivering this desideratum.

8. Ways of thinking

Sense and Reference. How is it that a given use of “Obama” refers to a particular person? This is distinct from the question of which thing I refer to. The reference (*Bedeutung*) is *what* I refer to; the sense (*Sinn*) is *how* I refer to it. We can refer to the same object in different ways: “The current POTUS” “I” “that man” and “Obama” might all share the same reference relative to the same context of use. Asking which object we think or speak about by a given use of a proper name is asking about its reference. Asking how we think and speak of a particular object by name is inquiring into its sense.

A statement of the form “t refers to a” can specify the reference alone, or sense as well. In former case, the requirement is that “t” and “a” have the same reference; in the latter, the same sense too.⁵⁷ Suppose we say that a given use of “Obama” refers

⁵⁶ See Heck (2002) for a discussion of a number of such difficulties.

⁵⁷ McDowell (1977)

to the current President of the U.S. Then we answer the question of reference—which individual “Obama” refers to—as both proper name and definite description share an object. But do we thereby answer the question of sense-- how a given use of “Obama” refers to its object? No; for one can rationally take conflicting attitudes to both (1) and (2), and indeed any other pair from this four:

- (1) The current President of the U.S. smokes
- (2) That man smokes
- (3) I smoke
- (4) Obama smokes

w.r.t. to the same individual in the same context of use and circumstances of evaluation.

Similarly, merely knowing that “Obama” refers to the particular object called “Obama” cannot capture the sense of “Obama” either, even though name and description share the same object. For one thing, it is circular. For another, there is room for a Frege case between “Obama smokes” and “The particular object called ‘Obama’ smokes”—when I fail to know the identity between the two. A referential specification like

- (5) ‘Obama’ refers to The current POTUS

will thus fail to capture its sense, despite getting the reference right. Insofar as a subject can think “Fa” and “Fb” with any two of these four, without also being in a position to judge “a = b” too, such a statement will not capture its sense. What we want from a *canonical referential specification* (CRS) is not the mere reference, then, but its sense as well. And knowing any of these other three cannot do the trick, by the rational requirements on reference captured by Frege’s Criterion.

9. In introducing his notion of sense (*Sinn*), Frege characterizes it in terms of the “way of being given” (*Art des Gegenbensein*)⁵⁸ the reference (*Bedeutung*) of an expression, in thinking or speaking about that reference by means of a given use of an expression. As Sebastian Rodl reminds us, Frege held “referring to an object is an aspect of thinking about it.”⁵⁹ It seems to me that one reason why is that referring is an essential aspect of the expression of thought about that object, known in a certain way, that it is F. A speaker uses a term ‘t’ to refer to an object o in the context of predicating F of t (i.e. o, the referent of ‘t’).

The trouble has always been in cashing out the metaphors used to characterize the notion of sense, in particular the standard, “manner of presentation.” Gareth Evans proposes a promising way of doing this by casting sense in terms of a proprietary “way of thinking” of a particular object. He conceives this as an answer to the

⁵⁸ Frege (1882)

⁵⁹ Rodl (2007: 6)

question, 'In virtue of what is the subject thinking of a particular object (that it is thus-and-so), in thinking about it as the particular referent of the term "t" the subject employs in giving expression to that thought?'⁶⁰ Evans' proposes the following approach to 'ways of thinking.' He writes:

...the desired notion can be explained in terms of the notion of an account of what makes it the case that a subject's thought is a thought about the object in question. Imagine such an account written out. 'S is thinking about the object *a* in virtue of that fact that...S...': what follows 'that' is an account in which references to the subject and the object thought about appear, possibly at several places. Now I suggest that another subject, *S'*, can be said to be thinking about the object *a* in the same way if and only if we get a true statement when we replace reference to *S* with reference to *S'* throughout the account provided for *S*, deriving '*S'* in thinking about *a* in virtue of the fact that...*S'*....'⁶¹

In entertaining a thought about a particular object *o* that it is *F*, we ask what is it in virtue of which it is *o* the subject thinks about as being *F*. The sense of the singular term '*t*' used to express the speaker's thought about *o* is a way of thinking about an object in virtue of standing in the relation in which one knows *o* as the particular object the subject thus thinks (or speaks) of, in thinking (or speaking) of it that it is *F*. What it is to know a particular demonstrative, first-person, or nominal reference is constitutively tied to the proprietary ways of thinking of an object distinctive of each mode of identification. The relation in virtue of which one thinks of an object in each of these ways is distinct, such that the way of thinking of an object yielded by a subject's standing in one is a different from the others. When a speaker uses "*t*" to refer to *o*, in the course of predicating *F* of *o*, the way in which the object is given is, in turn, the basis for the predication in which it figures in part.

10. *Unmediated*. To see this, consider Evans' formulation of what it is for an episode of thinking, predicating a property of an object, to be identification-free or identification dependent. A judgment "*a* is *F*" is identification-free if it is not mediated by a pair of judgments, "*b* is *F*" and "*a* = *b*"; identification-dependent otherwise. For example, if a speaker predicates "__smokes" of the current President of the U.S. on the basis of a prior judgment that "That man smokes" together with an identity-judgment, "That man is the current President of the U.S.," then her judgment is mediated by them. It is not in virtue of the way she knows the current President of the U.S. that she predicates "__smokes" of him or her; rather it is in virtue of her identification of the unique satisfier of the latter with whom she knows to be the referent of "that man," together with her judgment that that man smokes. That is, the basis of the predication does not derive from the mode of identification of an object—the pure definite description. Rather, it is identification-dependent insofar as it is mediated by the identity-judgment and the prior predication.

⁶⁰ Evans, (1985, 1982)

⁶¹ Evans (1982: 20-21).

By contrast, “That man smokes” is identification-free, insofar as it does not rely on any pair of a more fundamental identification of an object, plus a separate predication. In the context of my demonstrative thought expressible by “That man smokes,” the reference to *that man* shares the same ground as the predication ‘_smokes’ of a particular. I don’t first know of a particular person that he smokes, and then infer the demonstrative judgment on the basis of “that man = the particular person who smokes.” When a predication is identification-free, it is the way one knows the object that affords the predication. In identifying an individual as “that man,” in the course of the predication “That man smokes,” the way I know whom I think and speak of—*that man*—in turn delimits the range of unmediated judgments I can make (“smokes” “is tall” “is wearing a lavender tie”, etc.).⁶² I don’t first know of a particular person that he smokes, and then infer the demonstrative judgment on the basis of “that man = the particular person who smokes.”

11. *Modes of Identification.* Any form of reference that is not descriptive will relate thinkers to objects in some way other than unique satisfaction of a definite description. In the case of demonstrative and first-personal modes of identification, there is no definite description, such that an object’s uniquely satisfying it, is the basis for reference. And there is no definite description that could take the place of a demonstrative or first-personal identification. There are rather ways of knowing an object that aren’t unique satisfaction of a definite description. For Evans, the operative way of knowing is “a relation to an object by which one is in a position to know how things stand with it...an unmediated “knowledge-providing relationship.”⁶³ For each mode, the question is, how does the relation put me in a position to know how things stand with an object?

We are faced, then, with two questions. First, what relationship does a subject stand in through which he knows an object in thinking about it as being thus and so? Second, what is the content of the knowledge that he arrives at that constitutes this way of thinking?

12. *Demonstrative Identification.* Why is it that when I think of some particular object as being thus-and-so, by thinking of an object demonstratively, that I think of that object? For instance, in entertaining a demonstrative thought expressible by an utterance of “This is red” what is it in virtue of which I think about, say, a particular notebook in demonstratively identifying an object? The gist of Evans’ account of what we know when we demonstratively identify an object relates a subject to an object—not by unique satisfaction of a definite description, of course—but by the subject’s standing in a contextual relation to a potential object of reference, on the basis of which he can come to know the object as he demonstratively identifies it. In entertaining the particular demonstrative thought expressible by “This is red” I stand in a perceptual relation to a certain salient object, yielding pieces of information, like the instantiation of redness, such that, in so standing, I am able to

⁶² Cf. Rodl (op.cit.:6)

⁶³ *ibid.*

exploit its perceptible presence in demonstratively identifying it. What I thereby know is a particular object as the occupant of a particular location in time, relative to the subject's own position.

The information I receive from the object—color, shape, relative distance, etc.—is an essential component of the perceptual relation I stand by which I come to know the object. But such information cannot mediate the demonstrative identification, because it cannot figure in an identity-judgment, let alone be individuating. My judgment, “This is red” is fundamentally unmediated, as there is just one mode of identification in the offing, not two. It is not mediated by an inference from “The object I perceive is red” and “This is the object I perceive.” There is no room for judging “This is the object I perceive” on which to base a judgment “This is red” When I perceive that a particular object is red, I perceive that this is red. But this does not make the identification mediated. For the information is not part of an identity-judgment involving a separate identification of *this*.⁶⁴ Perceiving the object is not incidental to the knowledge of a demonstrative reference. My knowledge of *this* is the content of the demonstrative identification. It is the very standing in the informational relation itself that affords the unmediated demonstrative identification. The relation itself is not part of the content expressed by “this”—but only the knowledge of an object that standing in it affords.] If it were the causal relation itself, then no two individuals would ever think the same demonstrative thought.⁶⁵

13. *First-person Identification*. Having distinguished descriptive from demonstrative identification, we can now add first-person identification. As a singular mode of identification, it is not constituted by a relation of satisfaction. But it is also distinct from demonstrative identification, in being both non-perceptual and not essentially third-personal. The knowledge-providing relationship differs from perception in that it follows from it that who one knows is oneself. This is not inherent in any other mode. Rodl writes, “First person reference depends on a way of knowing an object such that I know an object in this way by being this object” (9). A first-person thought expresses knowledge its subject possesses, not by *perceiving* the object, but by *being* it. That is, the relation between subject and object is one of identity, in contrast to demonstrative (perceptual) and descriptive (unique satisfaction).

In entertaining a thought about a particular object by thinking of it first-personally, a subject stands to the object of his thought in the unique relation in which each subject of a first-person reference stands to himself or herself, on the basis of which he identifies the object of his thought—himself—and *as himself* (indirect

⁶⁴ I do not expect these brief remarks to convince someone who denies that perceptual content contains a demonstrative element. Rather, its role here is in giving shape to Evans' alternative vision of singular reference.

⁶⁵ Nor does a demonstrative content contain a conception of this relation.

reflexive).⁶⁶ That is, in entertaining an I-thought, I stand in a relation peculiar to each self-conscious subject, through which, in so standing, I know myself as myself. The way of thinking emerges through the unique relation in which a self-conscious subject stands to himself as such—as a subject of thought, experience, and action, occupying an extended subjective perspective on an objective world, as an objective continuant within it.⁶⁷ An object is only known first-personally insofar as he gains knowledge of himself as himself in virtue by standing in this unique relation to himself. Put simply, all that is at issue here is a self-conscious subject's thought about herself, which, in so entertaining it, she knows herself as the object of her thought. It is in this way different from Oedipus' thought about himself when he thought "The Slayer of Laius must die."

The content contributed by a particular first-person reference to the first-person thought it is an essential constituent of—the sense of "I"—consists in what is known when one knows oneself as oneself. The content of this knowledge is each subject's sense of "I". It is the difference "I" makes to thoughts expressible by it, compared to the contribution made by other, non-first-personal modes of identification. The knowledge gained by standing in this unique relation—the sense or content of "I"—does not itself include that relation, nor a conception of it. It is essential in entertaining one's own I-thought that one knows its object as itself. And it is essential in understanding another's expression of her I-thought that the hearer treat the reference in this way too.

Mach thought of himself when he thought of a demonstratively identified object ("That man is a shabby pedagogue"). And Oedipus thought of himself when he descriptively identified an object ("The slayer of Laius must die.") That is, each knew an object that happens to be himself, in virtue of either a demonstrative or a descriptive mode of identification. But in neither case did either of them know himself as himself. That is, neither thought of himself in the first-personal way. The differences between a first-person identification of oneself and these other not essentially first-personal identifications of oneself is evident in their rational power: how one thinks and acts on the basis of one identification or another. In thinking about an object first-personally, one is essentially thinking about oneself as one knows oneself.

The constitutive links between information and action diverge, as do the other dimensions of the rationality of understanding. Although the content of any does not contain the contextual information, it is constitutively linked to it. Take, the first-personal mode, for instance. What I know when I know who I think about in thinking about myself self-consciously, say, in entertaining "I am in danger," is constitutively linked to the informational relation that affords the self-identification and the action potential that attends it. At the same time as I know the first-person

⁶⁶ Castaneda (1966)

⁶⁷ Evans (1982: Ch.6), prefigured in way by Strawson (1966), and developed by McDowell (1998a) and Rodl (2007)

reference, I might also independently know those of a given descriptive, demonstrative, and nominal identification yet fail to connect it to my first-person reference. It is unique to the informational relation I stand in, in virtue of which I am in a position to know myself as myself, that I possess this knowledge. The proprietary kinds of informational relation operative in any of the other cannot afford this. And consequently, the action potential that is constitutively tied to a particular first-person sense cannot be activated either. I might only run for my life when I know that I have a gun pointed at me, rather than when I know by his reflection that that man has a gun pointed at him, or in amnesia I forget that I am called "Nick" but still know enough to participate in the practice, to understand "Nick has a gun pointed at him" or "The oldest child of SG & JH does", and not necessarily act in the only way constitutive of the first-person identification. So both the information that enables understanding and the action understanding affords are constitutively connected to the particular sense, even as they are not included in its content.

14. We now have three fundamental modes of identification on the table. Descriptive, demonstrative, and first-personal modes of identification are three primary ways that thinkers direct their thoughts to particular objects. To know an object by definite description is to identify it in terms of the relation of unique satisfaction. To know an object as *I* is to know oneself as oneself, afforded by one's standing in a relation of identity to oneself as a self-conscious subject. To know an object as *that* is to stand in a perceptual relation to an object, within which one demonstratively identifies it as the relative occupant of a place and time. Standing in each of these reference-constituting relations affords one knowledge of reference, in its own way, without the mediation of an antecedent identification, and without the relation itself, a conception of it, or the linguistic properties of its expressions, figuring into the content of what one knows. The content of each differs, even when everything else stays the same, because of the difference in ways of thinking: what Mach knows when he knows *I* is not what he knows when he knows *that*, even though the object known in each way is the same, and occur in the context of the same predication at the time and place of the same context of use.

15. Nominal Identification

Now what is the knowledge distinctive of competence with a proper name? Any descriptive formulation of the will not work, as discussed, since there is no common store of information that determines the reference of a name or is semantically expressed by any literal use of it. Nor can nominal identification be reduced to any of the other singular modes of identification. Suppose one knows the reference of a particular "that," and this happens to be Hesperus, though all one knows is the demonstrative identification. So in understanding an utterance of "That is visible," the way in which "that" contributes its object to truth-conditions is specifiable as knowledge of

(6) "That" refers to *that*, wrt to speaker, time and place.

To think of Hesperus demonstratively, to the effect that it is visible, the content of one's thought is constituted by the singular demonstrative content—what one can only know in a perceptual experience through which one singles out an individual as the relative occupant of place and time. It should be clear by now how such a knowledge of reference has quite a different rational impact from an identification of Hesperus by name. Consequently, we rule out

(7) "Hesperus" refers to *that*, wrt to speaker, time and place.

What is common knowledge among competent users of "NN" cannot be a particular demonstrative or first-personal identification of the referent of "NN." Whereas one speaker might know "*This* is NN" or "I am NN", an equally competent speaker might just as well not. So no descriptive, demonstrative, or first-personal identification can be distinctive of nominal identification. Even if one thinks that these other modes of identification always mediate nominal identification past the point of introduction, the knowledge arrived at is irreducible to what led to it. So it might be that all exercises of the knowledge of a name in understanding are mediated by some other identification or another. When speaker A understands an instance of "NN" his knowledge of reference is mediated by a different demonstrative identification from that which mediates speaker B's understanding. Nonetheless, they both arrive at the knowledge that "NN" stands for NN. And the differences in the ways they arrived at it need not matter at all to mutual understanding. So what is common knowledge to all users of "NN" as a proper name for a particular object, cannot be that "NN" stands for the DD, that "NN" stands for *that*, nor that "NN" stands for oneself as oneself. The point of a referential specification consists in specifying the contribution a name makes to the contents of whole thoughts containing it. And the contribution "NN" makes to the content of "NN is F" cannot be the same as what the others contribute to the whole contents expressible by "The DD is F", "That is F", or "I am F."

It appears then that the only way to specify the semantic contribution made by a name to the propositional content of sentences containing it is to state its reference by means of its own specific mode of nominal identification or another co-designative one:

(8) "Hesperus" stands for Phosphorus.

(9) "Hesperus" stands for Hesperus..

Both (8) and (9) reflect the fact that names contribute their assigned objects to the truth-conditions of sentences containing them. And in each case they are true, extensionally equivalent specifications of the reference of "Hesperus." It might seem, then, that because the right side of either statement could be substituted for the other without a change in reference or truth, they both exhibit the same semantic properties relevant to determining the content of the sentences in which the name figures.

But as Frege cases illustrate, the combination of competence with both names and ignorance of their co-reference points to a difference in content. This is the difference each name makes to the thoughts expressible by them. Recall Tully, a basically rational speaker of English, competent with both “Hesperus” and “Phosphorus” and yet ignorant that they co-refer. When she simultaneously accepts “Hesperus is visible” while rejecting “Phosphorus is visible” it is because the ways she thinks of what is in fact the shared reference is different in each case. If this correct, then *what she says* when she says that Hesperus is visible (uttering that very sentence in a suitable context), is different from what she says when she says that Phosphorus is visible (in uttering that very sentence). Even before we consider how others report her, and, what’s more, report her correctly, we face the fact their contents differ in some way. Fidelity to what she says, then, encourages us to register this difference in specifying the reference of each—at least with respect to the role each name plays in this speaker’s idiolect.

Now if the contents of her thought and talk are thus distinct, it would seem that an accurate report of what she says and thinks will respect this difference in turn.⁶⁸ Suppose she utters “Hesperus is visible” in the context of uttering “Hesperus is visible but Phosphorus isn’t,” acceptance of (8) would allow us to describe the speaker as having said that Phosphorus is visible but Phosphorus is not visible. This will quite clearly not amount to an acceptable characterization of her intentional act of utterance. So (9) but not (8) reflects the obvious fact that understanding “Hesperus” is independent of understanding “Phosphorus,” and that understanding them both need not be accompanied by the additional knowledge that they co-refer. Consequently, the substitution failures that arise reflect the differences in semantic knowledge constitutive of competence with the two names.

So suppose that this competent “Hesperus”-speaker was as ignorant of “Phosphorus,” “Venus,” and any other name for the planet as the no-name, demonstrative speaker was of all of them. That would appear to place her in a similar semantical-epistemic relationship to “Phosphorus” as the lone demonstrative-user bears toward “Hesperus” (*inter alia*). By all means, she may easily go on to acquire competence with it quickly, thanks largely to her prior, standing competence with “Hesperus.” None of that changes the trivial fact that a competent speaker of one name, like “Hesperus”, can remain in complete ignorance of the other co-designative name active in her language, like “Phosphorus.” During this period, it’s quite uncertain that an attempt to use one name to give an intentional description of an utterance employing the other would fare just as well

⁶⁸ In a series of papers collected in Cappelen & Lepore (2016: Part I), Cappelen & Lepore have argued that considerations of what is said should be kept separate from considerations of the correctness of reports of what is said. I accept this at least with regards to questions of the correct logical and semantic form of indirect speech reports. We can approach the question of what is said, even as we hive off the question of how to report what is said. But in a deeper sense, I reject their claim, as I deny that the determination of what is said is separable from the interpretation of others. The broader background for this is their rejection of Davidson’s apparatus of interpretation (not merely in the narrow ‘radical’) sense, toward which I feel much more benevolent.

as simply re-using the respective names in each of its own occurrences would, for the purpose of characterizing the content of the speaker's communicative intentions. So such systematic differences between the rational powers of a name and a demonstrative can similarly be manifested between two co-referring names. This what justifies our preference for the homophonic (9) over (8).

So a homophonic referential specification like (9) will be canonical, insofar as its form captures the irreducibility of the content of a nominal identification from descriptive, demonstrative, and first-personal modes identification. But having gotten this far our two fundamental questions remain unanswered. First, what is the relation that puts me in a position to know how things stand with an object, when I think and speak of it (as being F) by proper name. And second, what distinguishes the singular content expressed by a given use of a proper name from that of any other fundamental mode of identification, and from other instances of *nominal identification*. Pending answers to these questions, our account of what is distinctive about the singular sense constituted by knowing an object name will be confined to the form but not the content of a Canonical Referential Specification (CRS).

16. Let us compare utterances of the following four sentences.

- (1) The current President of the U.S. smokes.
- (2) That man smokes.
- (3) I smoke.
- (4) Obama smokes.

w.r.t. to the same individual in the same context of use and circumstances of evaluation.

The content of the knowledge distinctive of understanding each of "The current POTUS" "That man" "I" and "Obama" differs in virtue of their respective ways of thinking. As "I" stands to an object known to oneself as oneself, in virtue of a relation of identity; and "that" an object known as the relative occupant of time and place, in virtue of a perceptual relation; and "the current President of the U.S." stands to its object (if any) by way of a relation of unique satisfaction of descriptive content, what of "Obama"? What is it in virtue of which one thinks or speaks of a particular individual, to the effect that he or she smokes, in thinking and speaking of Obama that he smokes?

What is special about thinking of an object by name is the way that arriving at it hinges essentially on one's participation in a public practice.⁶⁹ When a Frege case arises between (4) and any one of the others, it is because knowing a name by the contextual relation of practice need not thereby enable any of the other three ways

⁶⁹ There is a dreary history of uncritical invocation of 'practice' in some mid-century, post-Wittgensteinian philosophy. Lest my use of the word associate me with it, here is a trigger warning: I mean Evans' notion of practice presented in the previous chapter and elaborated further below.

of thinking about that object; and conversely, knowing any of the other three cannot replace knowledge gained by participation in a practice. The content of knowledge of reference of a name is marked by its essential social constitution. Again, the semantic content of a proper name does not include anything about its constitutive relation—the practice—but only the knowledge of an object one gains in virtue of standing in the practice, as encapsulated by (9). What sets proper names apart from the other devices of singular reference, then, is its essentially social character.

There is an ineliminable social component to the semantic content of a proper name not shared by other singular terms. First-person thought does not depend on a social practice instituting a device for singular reference. When one entertains an I-thought, one thinks of oneself as oneself—not necessarily as the thing referred to by the natural language first-person pronoun “I”. One can have thought about oneself, even as one lacks a corresponding first-person pronoun. Same goes for demonstratives like “this” and “that.” The demonstrative content expressible by a particular use of “that” need not include the properties particular to the *word* “that”. In thinking “That is empty” I know *that* as a particular occupant—and it is not essential to knowing an object demonstratively that one thinks of it as the referent of “that.” Demonstrative and first-personal thought are thus independent of their corresponding linguistic devices. For these linguistic devices express contents that precede them.

The information that initially determines the reference of “NN” is of a distinct kind from those in any of the others, involving as it does an independent identification tied to knowledge of a conventional stipulation. By contrast, what determines the reference of “that” does not depend on any more fundamental identification; nor is the convention or character of “that” like that of a name-using convention. Specifically, understanding a given use of “that” requires adverting to immediate features of context—speaker, time, and place—that determine its reference. Understanding a name, by contrast, does not require knowing the content of the demonstrative identification involved in the original baptism, nor in an individual speaker’s own acquisition of the name. There is no way to understand a demonstrative utterance “That is F” without drawing on a particular context of use. But understanding “Obama is F” is not essentially tied to the context of use that determines its reference. Any demonstrative use of “that” determines its reference relative to a particular context of use. Understanding any utterance of “that” must advert to the context of use determining its reference. But the reference of any given use of “Obama” is not determined anew in every context of use. Rather it’s determined by its proprietary practice, which includes innumerable contexts of use, both actual and possible. And understanding “Obama” does not depend a speaker’s knowledge of the original demonstrative identification, in her linguistic community or her own lexicon. All that understanding requires is the knowledge of the object determined by those earlier, independent identifications; not knowledge of those demonstrative identifications themselves. By contrast, the information-invoked by a demonstrative can only lead to understanding insofar as it includes the contextual elements constitutive of the demonstrative reference.

What is distinctive about the semantic content of a proper name is its essentially social component—not essential to demonstrative or first-person reference.⁷⁰ The relation between subject and object is different, and this difference is reflected in the content that a name contributes to thoughts. To know an object by name is to know an object as the socially determined reference of that name, in virtue of the distinctive perspective one's standing in its proprietary name-using practice affords of it. To characterize what is distinctive about the name-bearing relation in this way is to distinguish its distinctive form of knowledge of reference in terms of its essential emergence and continued career within a proprietary practice.

The relation in which one stands to an object in virtue of which one thinks of the object as oneself, or as *that*, and as "NN" are each different. In the case of the latter, that relation is essentially socially constituted. To think about an object by name requires the name, the linguistic symbol, whose semantic properties are set by its place in a social practice. The convention of using "I" for the subject—speaker or author—is a social fact about the English pronoun. The convention of using "NN" as a name for x depends on different kinds of social facts. In the former, "I" is needed to express one's own first-person thought in language and equally understand others' expressions.

Of course in understanding an utterance one must know the convention relating the expressions to the proprietary way of thinking they express—but in so doing one entertains a thought that is not essentially dependent on the existence of these devices or knowledge of their workings. Whereas one can think of an object demonstratively or first-personally independently of a dedicated conventional device for its expression, in nominal reference, being essentially social and linguistic, there is nothing that could count as thinking or speaking of an object by name that did not constitutively involve the name itself. So "I" and "that" enjoy a separateness from the ways of thinking about their objects expressible by them, that "NN" does not. Thus nominal thought and talk is essentially linguistic and social in a way the others appear not to be. For the availability of a name to a subject depends on his participation in its practice. Consequently, the status of a reference clause for a term of each kind will differ in at least two fundamental ways. First, a specification for a particular "I" will use the pronoun to specify a representation content that is prior to it. And second, a clause for a demonstratives or an indexical must be tied to a specific context of use, as the clauses for names do not.

⁷⁰ This need not exclude cases where a lone individual gives a name to an object he knows, but shares it with no one else, using it in his own musings and monologues. He is thus the sole party to the practice he produces. Nevertheless, the fundamental point remains the same. First, there is nothing irremovably 'private' about his use, as there is no impediment to him introducing others to the name. Second, the fundamental point of contrast between proper names, on the one hand, and demonstratives and indexicals, on the other, remains intact in this case as in any other, with the use proper names not being essentially context-bound.

17. Two names for the same thing differ in sense, then, when the conditions constitutive of competence with each name, as elements in a public language, are systematically sensitive to differences in the rational power attending participation in distinct name-using practices. A homophonic statement of reference encapsulates the knowledge distinctive of competence with a proper name, as an element in a public language. The particular way of thinking of an object, characteristic of thinking about it by proper name, is distinct from other ways of thinking about it, in virtue of the way participation in a public name-using practice relates thinkers to objects. What is known in knowing an object by name is thus distinct from what is known in knowing that object in any other way, including another co-designative proper name. For a speaker to know an individual by name is for him to know which thing bears the name. A speaker's knowledge of a name presupposes her participation in its proprietary practice. It is this knowledge we exercise when we think and act on the basis of an understanding of a proper name—as when we know a seen object by name, or when we know who or what we are thinking or talking about in a given use of the use of the name, when we cannot know this by occurrent perception.

Further, these differences in content need not disappear whenever the subject does happen to know that they share an object. The distinct from the content of any of “I” stands for I, “The F” denotes the F, “that” refers to that, and a co-referring instance “NN4” stands for NN4, even when the referents, predicate, context of use (speaker, time, place) and circumstances of evaluation are the same. Frege cases bear this out, as do the demonstrable differences in rational power each sense reflects.

I might at once know “I” and “the DD” and know that they are the same, but still not be entertaining the same thought with “I am F” as I do with “The DD is F.” Why? It's not that I don't recognize that in believing F of I, and believing that “the DD” also has the same object, I believe of the DD that it is F.⁷¹ Rather, their differences persist because they remain fundamentally different ways of thinking, which are essential constituents of the whole thought. When I think, “I am tired”, I might also know that the unique denotation of “the oldest child of SG and JH” is the same as the referent of “I”. So perhaps there's an entailment from the first-personal to the descriptive belief, or at least a rational requirement to keep them consistent. But there's no reason why this wholly irrelevant identification should change the content of my thought. My first-person way of thinking remains operative. Its content is untouched by the adventitious identification. What I know in knowing the one or the other is essentially separate. The rational powers of each remain separate. For it remains the case that the descriptive identification and the first-personal identification involve fundamentally different ways of thinking, despite their accidental identification. I need not rely on one or their mode of identification in my past or future identifications of either one. Indeed, it is because they are wholly separate that I come to know the content of their identification. What I know when I know that they co-refer is not what I knew when I identified either one.

⁷¹ Although as I argue in the final chapter, this is not rationally required based on consideration of the context of inference.

The same general point applies speakers who understand two names and know that they co-refer. Would the singular thought expressed by a suitable sentential utterance of “Clay” be characterized just as well in terms of “Ali”? Consider the following.

(5) Cassius Clay won the gold medal at the Olympics in 1960.

(6) Muhammad Ali won the gold medal at the Olympics in 1960.

Switching the names here might fail to preserve the objective circumstances that the correctness of their assertion depends on. When Ali took on the “Ali” name, it was emblematic of a variety of cultural, religious, and political significance—expressly not shared by “Clay.” These reasons weren’t apparent only to him, but to a host of others throughout the world. Those who refused to call him “Ali” were in effect refusing to participate in this new name-using practice (among other things). In so doing, they are unwittingly liable to charges of violating the correct standards of use for “Clay” too. In changing names, Ali signaled that when speaking of him from then on, it should be with “Ali.” The name “Clay” is still applicable for describing him prior to that—and might even be required. Speaking of Ali’s final fight in 1983, one of these name-resistors says, “Clay lost to Berbick in Bermuda.” One sense in which this is a semantic error is that the “Clay”-practice underwent a drastic revision. To continue to be a party to that practice compels its participants to restrict the use of “Clay” to the period before the name change. Conversely, swapping the names in (5) and (6) might also betray a semantical error, at least insofar as it’s constitutive of the “Clay” practice to maintain its use in descriptions of earlier events, and constitutive of the ‘Ali’ practice not to retrospectively assign different meanings.⁷²

On second thought, although the use of “Clay” for Ali after he took on the new name might be frowned upon, it is not evidently a semantic error to swap the two, rather than being a breach of decorum or a violation of linguistic authority. But maybe not in another sense. If it is correct that what one thinks when one thinks of Ali is not necessarily the same as what one thinks when one thinks of Clay, then when one speaks to give voice to these thoughts, what one says in each case should express these differences. Insofar as one but not the other captures this difference in content, it would be a semantical error to use to capture what is only semantically expressed by the other. The other potential source of semantical error concerns reports of speech. Insofar as only when captures the intended content in a context of use, accuracy in reporting requires eschewing indiscriminate swapping.

⁷² Another example might be a group of scientists whose use of “Point a” and “Point b” or simply “a” and “b” to refer to what is in fact the same point in space, though they don’t yet know that. As long as this remains undiscovered, the observations, calculations, predictions, etc. corresponding to dealings with each name will systematically diverge. (Mark Wilson, *in propria persona*, mentioned actual instances like this as illustrations of the point I wish to make.)

Let's consider what could constitute correct answers to questions like "Who was the Ring Magazine fighter of the year in 1963?" Answering either "Clay" or "Ali" does not seem to be obviously in error. However, the risk of semantical error might arise in addressing the content of past speech. When someone in 1963 said, "Clay is the Ring Magazine fighter of the year," its questionable whether what they said—the content they intend to express—is the same as the content of "Ali is the Ring Magazine fighter of the year." As the vocable "Ali" was not a name for Ali in 1963, is the content it came to capture the same as the content captured by the use of "Clay" in 1963? It is not evidently so, considering the temporal ties to the later practice. Further, there are now familiar risks one runs in reporting this past use in terms of the new name.

In any case, the point is not that the various characterizations that set the one practice apart from the other figure in the specification of the content of either name. They are both ordinary proper names, essentially non-descriptive. However, they do serve to highlight the systematically divergent public standards of correct use constitutive of each name. The contents of "Clay" and "Ali," while singular, would not then be the same. Their difference is not merely the superficial difference in the two expressions, but the way those two expressions express objective differences determining the rational patterns of use characteristic of competence with both names. One's perspective on the world in thinking about Ali need not be the same as the perspective occupied in thinking about Clay. Thinking of Clay and thinking of Ali, then, might both present the same man to the mind, in two singular but distinct thoughts. The content of their respective referential relations is not exhausted merely by being two vocables or signs for the same object, for the semantic and cognitive contribution of the names consist of two singular ways of thinking, characteristic of thoughts expressible by proper names of the same thing. That it contributes the content it does at all is wholly a matter of the emergence and continued career of a name in a proprietary name-using practice shaped and animated by the referential intentions of linguistically competent self-conscious subjects.

On this ground, knowledge of co-reference need not necessitate or permit indiscriminate use of the two names. Consequently, the rational basis for homophony remains in place for at least those pairs of co-referring names whose distinct modes of presentation continue to be manifested in systematically divergent rational patterns as a result of the different prevailing standards of correctness within each proprietary practice. The continuing justification for homophony is the need for the distinct contents of each referential specification for "Clay" and "Ali" to reflect the distinct contents exhibited by the distinct intentional paths provided by each name.⁷³ Thus we preserve both:

(7) "Clay" stands for Clay.

(8) "Ali" stands for Ali.

⁷³ This need not always be the case, provided there are no sufficient grounds to posit two practices.

Thinking of him as Ali and thinking of him as Clay are two different ways of thinking about the same man. When I know them to be the same, I know that in entertaining a thought in either way, I am thinking *of* the same person. So I would indeed recognize that what I believe of Ali I ipso facto believe of the heavyweight champion of the world in 1964. Nonetheless, what I think remains different in virtue of these distinct ways of thinking. Allow further that I also know “that man I saw at Tyson/Berick,” the referent of “I” when Ali said “I am F”, and “Clay” as being the same man I know to be the referent of “Ali.” The same basic point applies to them all. The object (Bedeutung) of my thought is the same, as is the predicative material, but the way I think of it contributes a different content to the thoughts expressible by utterances of each. In each case, the difference turns on what I know when I know the object in each of these ways. Even as I know that what I think *about* is the same man, I know that these are different ways of thinking about him.

What it is in virtue of which I think about him when I think of Ali and when I think of Clay remain different, owing to the distinct way each name-using practice continues to relate its participants to the same man. The semantic impacts of each would then still be made manifest in the systematic divergences in rational power each name effects. Large swathes of the information-invoked by “Clay” and “Ali,” respectively, could only enable understanding of just one or the other.

It is also crucially important to keep in mind that we do not use the name in isolation from others’ competent use of the name. Just because I know the same person, at once, as Ali and Clay doesn’t mean you do, even though you know them as if they referred to different people. For we coordinate actions and interpretations involving the shared, public use of the sense expressed by the name with each other. Perhaps a fellow name-user only knows “Ali,” or knows “Clay” too but not that they co-refer. If I need you to do some involving Ali, who you don’t know as Clay, then our shared endeavors in dealings with Ali stand or fall according to the characteristic way of thinking exercised in understanding one or the other.

18. Rational Power

To appreciate what is special about the sense of a proper name, I propose we turn now to the *rational powers* that inform competence with each one: the distinct intentional patterns in thought and action attending the semantic impact of each way of thinking. I distinguish four dimensions of the rational power that comes with understanding a proper name as a proprietary way of thinking of its particular reference: informational, explicational, inferential, and behavioral.

Information. As we have seen, informational relations serve several roles in the constitution of a practice. We use information, in the first instance, to identify a practice. It is constituted by the activity of a core group of speakers who know an object, know it further as “NN,” and accumulate bodies of information and misinformation in their direct dealings with it and in the circulation of information

in communication involving “NN.” The totality of information prevailing in a practice will continue to anchor the reference established by the original producers, as long as it derives from that practice—in the sense that it constitutes its rational source, as construed in the previous chapter. All such information is tied to NN by producer’s knowledge.

Which particular pieces of information end up associated with “NN” is generally incidental to the identity of “NN” as name for o. Producers might or might not associate G with “NN”, but as G does not fix the referent of “NN” the identity of reference is not essentially tied to this particular piece of information. Recall the point from the last chapter: the accumulation of information does not itself fix reference, but it does reinforce it by its ties to practice. It is not essential to reference remaining fixed that this or that piece of information becomes answerable to it. So its fixation is generally indifferent to what information does or does not get associated with it, provided only that the bulk of it derives from the practice. As it is not fixed by any particular piece of information outside of the producers’ single piece of knowledge, reference generally does not change as new information is added or dropped. Similarly, the sense of a name—specified by the content of the knowledge that “NN” stands for NN—need not change according to what information does or does not get included, provided that whatever information does get included is alike in its ultimate answerability to what is known as “NN.” Neither sense nor reference, then, varies according to the contingent contents of a file.

Conversely, that G or any other particular piece of information does become answerable to the referent of “NN” does depend essentially on “NN” having the reference it does. That certain pieces of information do get included is a matter of the identity of the name. It is no coincidence that much of the information in an “Obama”-file comes from Obama—in the extended sense of its practice. And the fact that “Obama” stands for Obama is not unrelated to the inclusion of “current President” in many “Obama”-files. So on the one hand, the reference of “Obama” is not fixed according to whether or not “current President” is associated with the name or not. On the other, this information only finds its way into that file because of its place in the practice.

On an individual level, information allows speakers to identify the practice they wish to join and gain entry to it as a participating consumer. At the limiting point, parasitic consumerism can partake in the fixed reference, even as they cannot participate in the practice, because of their overriding intention to participate in the practice determined as the source of the minimal information responsible for introducing the name into the lexicon of a potential participant. For a participating consumer, their files do dominantly derive from the practice, first enabling entry, followed by competence use, filling their files with information issuing from the practice, and thus making an individual contribution to the continued anchoring of reference to the practice that first fixes it.

The information available to any competent participant further facilitates understanding in context, by virtue of the relations between the information a speaker and an audience associate with the name and the way it is being used on a given occasion, such as employing a predicate popular in a particular phase of the practice. The informational output is then the content of the understood utterance. It need not itself include the information invoked in context that facilitates understanding by indicating the relevant practice for the given use of the name. What the transfer of information does include is the sense of name. In a successful act of communication—characterized by the speaker’s intention to inform an audience of the singular thought expressible by her utterance of “Hesperus is F,” and the audience understanding this in entertaining such a thought—part of the information transmitted is the apprehension of the relevant reference of “Hesperus.” This is necessary for the audience to tie the predicative information to the appropriate “Obama”-file, such as the one for Barack or the one for Michelle, and so on. A speaker competent with “Obama” as a proper name for Barack and a proper name for Michelle can disambiguate a given use according to the information invoked in its context. Identifying the right practice is necessary for ensuring the information is placed in the right file. Contextual information, broadly including background knowledge, shared practice between conversational participants, and salient pieces of information particular to the context of utterance, are relevant in facilitating episodes of understanding a given use of “Obama” by placing it within the practice in which speakers identify the reference in context. So the information capable of being transferred in an episode of understanding includes the sense of the name as a constituent, which also allows the information it combines with to be transmitted in understanding. That is, in many cases what connects the information to the name is the way identifying that object by name opens one up to information that is peculiar, at least in its context, to that particular way of thinking about an object.

In these ways, we can distinguish two names for the same object, such as “Hesperus” and “Phosphorus” according to the informational channels peculiar to each practice. Their references are fixed first by two separate practices. One issues from a practice defined by the knowledge of a particular object as “Hesperus” and the other from a practice defined by the knowledge of a particular object as “Phosphorus.” Assuming no member of either practice has knowledge of co-reference, there is no general reason why information culled under one name file should ipso facto find a place in the other. And so when there does happen to be an overlap between them, it does not spring from knowledge of co-reference. In this way, each name is tied to one body of information and not the other, simply by virtue of each one, being the name it is, deriving its information from within its respective practice. This information is inextricably bound up with knowledge of reference, or understanding, in each case. A producer who knows the reference of “Hesperus” does so in the context of the informational relations that anchor its reference. A consumer who lacks producer’s knowledge but is competent nonetheless is so, by virtue of the way she can advert to certain pieces of information to identify the relevant practice, and further bring it to bear in becoming a participating consumer. The file she goes on to accumulate is

filled with information answerable to the referent of the name, by virtue of having that practice as its rational source. In understanding a given use, the information invoked in the context of use facilitates understanding by revealing the relevant practice.

Despite their shared bearer, then, each name could very well vary in every other respect, as a result of their respective homes in distinct practices, kept apart by the separate bodies of information operative in each, owing to the buildup of each body on the basis of two distinct pieces of producers' knowledge. As they are grounded in two different identifications of an object, the accumulation of information in each case is driven by the observation and testimony of the object known either by one name or the other—but not both, as long as they remain unaware of the common object. So there is no reason for information associated with one to thereby become associated with the other. Despite their dossiers being answerable to the same object, they are nonetheless systematically separated by the way information becomes subsumed by one or the other. The fact that certain information goes into a “Hesperus”-file is essentially tied to the fact that the reference of “Hesperus” is fixed according to producer's knowledge of an object as “Hesperus.” It is on the basis of this knowledge that information becomes answerable to the referent of “Hesperus” in the first place.

To sum up: we here descry six salient features of the information channels characteristic of a proper name-using practice: (1) a practice pivots on a particular piece of reference-fixing knowledge, which (2) determines what information gets filed under the name, according to its being information answerable only to what is known by that name, (3) thus determining distinct dossiers on both the individual and communal level. The upshot is (4) to constrain the range of information necessary for the mere maintenance of reference, (5) participation in the practice, (6) and the capacity for the information filed under “NN” to remain answerable to its fixed referent, contributing thus to the ongoing preservation of reference. As examples of two co-referring proper names, issuing from distinct practices, and whose speakers are unaware of their shared bearer, “Hesperus” and “Phosphorus” exemplify differences along each of these six informational dimensions. As the course of each informational channel is set by the knowledge of an object as the particular bearer of a proper name, reference is fixed by this knowledge of it, determining this reference as the bearer of any given occurrence of the name within the space of the practice. This just as much ties the sense of a name—what we specify by a suitable instance of a reference-clause of the form “‘NN’ refers to o”—to the rational ground provided by producers' reference-fixing knowledge. So we treat the selective pattern of information transfer as a manifestation of its sense along this dimension.

(ii) *Explication*. One salient aspect of the explicational⁷⁴ dimension of understanding a proper name is the ability to offer a correct answer to what I shall call *the*

⁷⁴ I borrow this expression from Burge (1999:343).

referential question.⁷⁵ A name-user's answer to questions concerning what or whom he or she calls by name. Any speaker who aspires to competence with the name must have an adequate answer to the referential question. We should think about the content of a question in terms of its set of correct answers.⁷⁶ How do we decide what counts as a correct answer? The primary feature of any correct answer is that it evinces information that identifies the practice the speaker wishes to join—information whose adequacy, as I have stressed, depends on its capacity to connect the speaker's use to the practice that fixes reference. For a parasitic consumer, like the speaker in "Nancy," adequate answers in response to "Who is Nancy" available to her will include such sentences as "Whoever or whatever my husband was talking about" or, at the limit, "Whoever or whatever this name comes from" and the like. A disqualifying answer would be "An adulterous lover of my husband," as this severs the link to the practice. On the other end of the spectrum, the adequacy of a producer's answer is over-determined, as it were, to the extent that it exploits the same piece of knowledge that determines reference. Between them, the correctness of a consumer's answer will be contextual and variable, depending in each case on his adverting to the information that enables his competent participation.

The appropriateness of each kind of response is tailored to the status of each kind of member. The standard of correctness for a producer is to evince the knowledge indicative of compete mastery of the name-using practice; for a participating consumer, the requirement is only that she evinces information adequate for her competent participation in at least some segments of the practice, gauged according to McDowell's measure. For the non-participating consumer the bar for a correct answer is lowered to the level leading only to the merest identification of the relevant practice, while avoiding being overtaken by rationally inert sources of information.

The only common thread among the three is the adequacy of the information in the answer to reach the producer's knowledge, in a way that is appropriate for each level of involvement. In this sense, any adequate answer presupposes producer's knowledge. Since this is only known to producers, as a presupposed proposition held by them, we must ask in what sense consumers are beholden to this presupposition they cannot currently entertain. The answer is that the single piece of producer's knowledge is a proposition presupposed by any correct answer to a referential questioning concerning the name in its practice. So producer's knowledge is a presupposition of the question, regardless of who is answering it, rather than a presupposition held by any participant apart from producers. So producer's knowledge is presupposed by any use of the name with respect to its practice, as it is a condition for reference at all.

⁷⁵ The inspiration for this comes from Wiggins richly suggestive observation (2003: 486): "For a proper name to have a meaning, there must be an answer to the question 'which object does the name stand for?'—and such an answer cannot help depend on some conception of the thing designated." Another inspiration is Stanley (2011), who suggests a strategy to de re attitudes based on the adequacy of a subject's answers to a contextually relevant range of know-wh questions.

⁷⁶ Hamblin (1973), Belnap & Steele (1976), Karttunen (1977), Groenendijk & Stokhof (1997)

19. Now I follow Belnap & Steele in treating the presupposition of a question as being a sentence that is a logically necessary condition for the possibility of a correct (true) answer.⁷⁷ What might some of these be in the case of a referential question of the form “Who or what is NN?” Consider again the features any adequate answer needs to involve: targeting the relevant reference in one’s general intention, answerability to the actual referent, and the ability to assess it in meeting (MM). This presupposes that NN exists.⁷⁸ A standard negation test for presupposition provides *prima facie* evidence of this. This further entails “‘NN’ refers”—and not merely that, but also that “NN” refers to whoever or whatever is called “NN.” The reason these are presuppositions of any referential question for an ordinary proper name⁷⁹ is the same reason any given use of the name to refer to its referent involves these two interlocking presuppositions: both are *prima facie* certified by the negation test. As the existence of NN and the referent of “NN” are necessarily tied to the same object (if any), the only thing separating the two is the significance of mentioning name “NN” itself in stating the presupposition of reference, on the one hand, and the use of the name in stating the presupposition of existence. In mentioning the name, the referential presupposition amounts to the merely metalinguistic knowledge that “NN” stands for whoever or whatever is so-called. What makes these properties fundamentally presuppositional—rather than assertional by virtue of being part of the semantic content or sense expressed by the name—is their utter inutility in conferring an understanding of the name. For one reason, these presuppositions are shared by every name in general, but also every particular proper name employing the particular vocable or expression “NN.” So there is nothing to separate one from any other. This is borne out by considering how very little (if any) of the rational dimensions distinctive of a particular name such meager knowledge would enable a speaker to apprehend. Third, insofar as basic competence requires a general reference-preserving intention, any competent use of the name would seem to also presuppose “The speaker intends to speak of NN.” Consider: “John is jolly” and I intend to say of John that he is jolly.

There might be other presuppositions, but these are three main semantic ones. They will be presupposed in all competent uses of the name. They too constitute a kind of rational relation, particular to the name. Bringing the three together, it is clear that the presuppositions of two co-referring names will not be the same. Contrast the two sets of semantic presuppositions for “Hesperus” and “Phosphorus” (*qua* proper names for the same particular thing, like the planet Venus):

(Existence-P): “Hesperus exists”

(Reference-P): “Hesperus” stands for that which is called “Hesperus”

(Intention-P): “The speaker intends to preserve the reference of “Hesperus”

⁷⁷ Op.cit.

⁷⁸ See Van der Sandt (1992) for more on the existence-presupposition of a proper name.

⁷⁹ By “ordinary proper name” I just mean one occurring outside the scope of a pretense, supposition, or deception. I discuss these latter in the following chapter.

(Existence-P): "Phosphorus exists"

(Reference-P): "Phosphorus" stands for that which is called "Phosphorus"

(Intention-P): "The speaker intends to preserve the reference of "Phosphorus"

(iii) Inference. The informational and presuppositional contents to which a particular proper name is subject will inform the inferential role of the name in any of the patterns of reasoning in which it might happen to figure. Here's a simple illustration of their inferential differences. "Cicero is fearsome" and "Cicero is not placid" entail both (5) and (7) in the first valid inference. But "Cicero is fearsome" and "Tully is not placid" do not entail (7') in the second invalid argument.

1. Cicero is fearsome.
2. Cicero is not placid.
3. There is something fearsome.
4. There is something not placid.
5. There is something fearsome and there is something not fearsome.
6. Cicero is fearsome and Cicero is not placid.
7. There is something both fearsome and not placid.

- 1' Cicero is fearsome
- 2' Tully is not placid.
- 3' Cicero is fearsome and Tully is not placid. (1,2 conj)
- 4' There is something fearsome. (1 EG)
- 5' There is something not placid. (2 EG)
- 6' There is something fearsome and there is something not placid.
- 7' There is something both fearsome and not placid.

If, however, we add "Tully is Cicero" as a premise to the second argument, we can validly derive (7'). But that extra-premise is not a logical truth, as "Cicero is Cicero" or "Tully is Tully" are, and so cannot be derived from them alone, irrespective of its truth. Logical and semantic competence alone is not sufficient for determining the truth of every identity statement formed out of any two names for which one is basically logically and semantically competent. Of course, it will often be the case that we know two names as names for different things, but this is not guaranteed.

Each speaker who understands "Cicero" as Cicero associates an idiosyncratic body of information with it. Any two speakers are minimally alike, even if there is no overlap in their dossiers, because each dossier is answerable to the bearer. The sense of a name is what is common to the inferential and behavioral potential of sentences employing it with basic competence. Because I understand "Cicero" as a name for Cicero and not Tully, the information I associate with each name will be systematically different. I will only recognize an "Cicero"-utterance as a thought about Cicero. So the inferential and behavioral potential will systematically diverge.

Now the sense of a proper name, being the distinctive way of thinking about its object constitutive of competence with it in a public language, opens the possibility of two names for the same object contributing differently to the circumstances in which their utterances could count as correct. But being non-descriptive, and so object-dependent, understanding a proper name can only consist of one thing: knowing an object as the bearer of that name. The sense of “Cicero” is different from general, specificatory ways of thinking about him, and from other indexical and demonstrative modes of thinking. Even when, he = Cicero, or I = Cicero, the name marks a distinctive way of thinking about the object. A central difference Evans emphasizes between the two is the role of a public name-using-practice shaping the use of the name. All that’s distinctive about understanding “Cicero” is knowing which individual it pertains to, in the context of the practice calling that individual by that name. There need be nothing more relating each idiolectic body of information, other than each being causally tied to the relevant bearer, which is itself known as such by those who use the name with understanding.

Each speaker who understands “Cicero” as Cicero perhaps associates an idiosyncratic body of information with it. Any two speakers are minimally alike, even if there’s no overlap in their dossiers, because each dossier is answerable to the bearer. Still, what is common to basic competence will be manifest in the difference each name makes to inferential patterns such as the simple one above. Because I understand “Cicero” as a name for Cicero and not Cicero, the information I associate with each name will be systematically different. I will only recognize an “Cicero”-utterance as a thought about Cicero. So their inferential potential will systematically diverge.

(iv) *Behavior.* Assertion is an instructive way to bring out the behavioral dimension built into understanding a proper name. In asserting the sentence “Hesperus is F,” I commit myself to the truth of the assertion. Do I thereby commit myself to the truth of an assertion of the sentence “Phosphorus is F”? Suppose I am presently incapable of understanding an utterance of the latter sentence. Not knowing the grounds for its truth, I cannot justifiably be committed to the truth of its assertion. So I can be held responsible for the first but not the second. Somebody who takes the assertion that Hesperus is visible to be false—knowing “Hesperus” as a name for the same object as I know it to be—can challenge me on it. But someone who denies an assertion of “Phosphorus is visible” cannot justifiably use that as a basis for challenging my assertion of the sentence “Hesperus is visible.” They could only do so if, in asserting the one sentence, I thereby take on the commitments attending an assertion of the other. But if undertaking the commitment requires understanding, which I lack in the case of the second sentence, then I can’t be held responsible for it.

It is important to separate two aspects of the normativity of assertion here. It is one thing to say that I am committed to all that is entailed by my assertion, whether I

know them or not.⁸⁰ It is quite another to hold me responsible for any *act of asserting* one of these entailments. In an assertoric utterance of “Hesperus is visible” I might very well be committed to all it entails, and thus committed to the truth of “Phosphorus is visible” as well. That said, there are further commitments undertaken by an act of assertion that are not applicable to those that could be undertaken by act of asserting any of its entailments. In asserting “Hesperus is visible” I might commit myself to all it entails, but I do not thereby commit myself to the other obligations particular to an assertion of any of these others. In general, to act in one way is not itself to act on all of its logical entailments; nor are the normative requirements of a particular act immediately incur the normative requirements attending acting on any of its entailments.⁸¹

If, however, I assert “Hesperus is visible” and “Phosphorus is not visible”—in the same breath, as it were—I do thereby commit to the truth of each. In this case, endorsing one and rejecting the other can rationally pit them against each other without compromising my relevant logical or semantical credentials. I don’t make myself vulnerable to justifiable criticism targeted at my exercise of the relevant logical and semantical capacities, despite the two names, as a contingent matter of fact, naming the same object. That said, I am not exempt from any further kind of criticism—in particular, ones centering on the overarching rational ideal of revising one’s beliefs, and in the process rearranging one’s inferential commitments, in the light of new facts. Suppose someone who knows that they co-refer challenges my claim that Phosphorus is not visible. He says, “Look, Hesperus is visible; and Hesperus is Phosphorus. So Phosphorus is visible.” In committing myself to “Phosphorus is not visible” I commit myself to a claim determined as correct or incorrect iff things are as I say they are—that Phosphorus is not visible—and in this I am mistaken. Nevertheless, asserting “Hesperus is Hesperus” doesn’t itself commit me to asserting “Hesperus is Phosphorus,” owing partly to the dictates of the rational structure of assertion not requiring anything beyond the standard logical and semantical principles touched on above.⁸²

20. Such is an illustration of the systematic rational powers distinctive of the proprietary way of thinking constitutive of competence with a proper name. To share the referent of a proper name, one must possess an adequate answer to its referential question, certifiable by the adequacy of the information involved in maintaining reference, at a minimum, and opening the way for mastery of the practice, on the other end. Any particular proper name, subject as it is to the conditions dictated by its essential place in its practice, will thereby be distinguished from any other word, including a co-referring name, in point of the

⁸⁰ The core normative element of commitment inherent in assertability is a point forcefully developed by Brandom (1983, 1994, ch.4 sec.3).

⁸¹ This point is most rigorously developed in the logic of agency of Belnap, Perloff, and Xu (2001).

⁸² Highlighting the defining commitment of assertion is meant to be illustrative but not exhaustive of all aspects of the rational structure of assertion. Any of the other defining features of assertions would serve this purpose just as well. See the helpful taxonomy provided by Macfarlane (2011).

fundamental piece of knowledge fixing reference, and, as a result, the proprietary place within the practice of the information that issues from producer's knowledge. The upshot is that two co-referring names, separated by their respective practices, will systematically diverge, beginning with the knowledge that fixes reference and defines practice, leading inexorably to two separate networks of information channels, the presuppositions that accompany it, and thus in its conditions for competence within the inferential and behavioral activity involving the name.

The sense of a proper name—the distinctive way of thinking of an object in thinking of it by name—is itself an essential aspect of the knowledge that fixes reference and defines a practice according to the activity that flows from it, manifested in the various exemplifications of the name's rational power. A correct specification of the content of a proper name—a *canonical referential specification* (CRS), like the homophonic reference-clause for "Hesperus" above—will express what is known by those who think of an object by means of a name. The content of each serves as a way of indicating the knowledge exercised in episodes of understanding the name. One way to bring out what is distinctive about any such sense is to highlight how the knowledge constitutive of competence constrains the form of each dimension of its rational power. What is special about the sense of a proper name is the way the knowledge that constitutes it systematically informs the trajectory of a name in its defining informational, explicational, inferential, and behavioral aspects.

21. A Canonical Referential Specification

To appreciate the wider significance of a CSR, I suggest we approach it in the light of an enduring lesson from Quine, in the words of Tyler Burge: "Quine's insight, richly developed by Putnam, that even the most fundamental propositional summaries of meaning and understanding are about a subject matter, can be true or false, and are thus subject to epistemic norms"⁸³

The most significant feature of a canonical referential specification (CRS) for a proper name, such as (8), is that while the name is merely *mentioned* on the left-hand side, it is *used* on the right-hand side as a proper name for a particular individual.⁸⁴ Understanding an occurrence of "Ali" in understanding an utterance of the form "Ali is F" demands no more or less than understanding its occurrence on the right-hand side of (8). By the same token, the condition of reference for "Ali" are the same in each kind of occurrence. The general requirements for reference and understanding a given use of a proper name as it occurs in a referential specification are the same as they are for any other given use of that name for its particular referent. For it is the same way that reference and understanding proceed on all other occasions of use.

⁸³ Burge (1999: 351)

⁸⁴ McDowell (1998b)

The content expressed by the axiom cannot precede the intentional use of the expression as a proper name for a particular, with all its rational power. For the axiom to have any content, the name must already be in use. It is not responsible for bringing the name into being. That is, it does not bring the fact it states into being. What it states is a social semantic fact about a particular practice—that “Ali” is a proper name for a particular object. A mere statement of that fact—as in the axiom—is not how that fact emerges. An utterance of (8) does not itself determine reference. Rather, the fact that the axiom states presupposes the name’s possession of a particular referent. The reason is that a referential specification is not the same as its corresponding referential stipulation. The axiom states a pre-existing reference; the stipulation does not—it contributes to the creation of the referent. Recall: “Let’s call x ‘Cicero’” does not itself state the referent. If it did, there would be no point to stipulating it. In being a stipulation rather than a specification it is signally responsible for the creation of a reference to be specified. It does not itself specify it. The CRS codifies the fact brought into being by the knowing acts of producers.

Abstracted from practice, the axiom is totally inert and lifeless. Its content and rational power come from the antecedent establishment of reference and understanding. The only utility it has is to codify these things. All that everyone capable of understanding has in common is the knowledge it expresses. How they learned the name—arrived at this knowledge—could all be different. And no two speakers might associate the same information with it. Yet what they know is the same, despite these differences. And that commonality is made manifest in what is common to competence: the ability to think and talk by means of the name—a competence that only comes from participation in the practice. For it to have any content, then, the name must already be assigned a referent. And to understand it—know the content it expresses—one must already know that reference in being able to think about it in the way it expresses. It is a way of expressing what is already known. Everyone capable of understanding it does so by exercising the very understanding it expresses.

Consequently, the essential context for understanding the axiom is its occurrence within the relevant name-using practice. Reference only arises relative to practice, and knowledge of reference, or understanding, can only be arrived at in attaining competence within the practice. The axiom is thus a way of codifying what everyone who understands the name within the practice knows. It is meant to capture what is distinctive about the knowledge exercised in understanding a proper name: (i) the capacity for thought and action marked by its distinctive rational patterns, (ii) which one can only appreciate by the proprietary way of thinking that only comes from participation in a public practice. It is not a rule superintending the use of the name, in advance of its emergence in practice. Rather, it is a codification of the content evinced in understanding: rational sensitivity toward the intentional impact of a proper name.

Recall

(9) “Ali” refers to Ali.

What is the subject matter? A referential relation. Between a word and object, speaker and object, or both? As stated, between word and object. But there is no referential relations between names and objects that does not constitutively involve referential relations between speakers and those objects. Neither (9) nor

(10) Speakers use ‘Ali’ to refer to Ali

are more fundamental than each other. The truth of any instance of the one is inextricably caught up with the truth of the other.

The subject matter of (9) is a kind of social fact, and not unlike the fact that such-and-such is \$5 bill, or a touchdown, or the heavyweight champion of the world, etc.⁸⁵ Consider

(11) Such-and such is a \$5 bill.

(12) Here’s a five-dollar bill.

(11) expresses a social fact. It could not be true, except in virtue of the truth of instances like (12). Conversely, instances like (12) are only true in virtue of the fact stated by (11). Further, the content expressed by an utterance of (12) doesn’t assert the content of (11). On the one hand, (11) concerns what it is to be a \$5 bill by specifying it on the left in terms that do not presuppose concepts of currency. Thus its truth depends on the intentional, institutional activities and practices involving currency.⁸⁶ But (12) presupposes this background, rather than asserting it, in asserting (12). The content of (12) does not include a specification of money.

Similarly,

(13) Frazier spoke of Ali

does not include a specification of the social fact of (9). It presupposes but does not assert the content expressed by (9). The intentional use of “Ali” to speak of Ali by name does not precede the fact that “Ali” is a way of thinking and speaking of a particular person by name. On the one hand, the semantic fact of (9) is brought into being by the intentional activity of speakers using “Ali” as proper name for a particular person. On the other, neither (9) nor (10) is more fundamental than the other, either temporally or conceptually. But a particular instance of (10) like (13) presupposes (9).

⁸⁵ My approach to the ‘metasemantics’ of proper names is essentially that of the ontology of a certain kind of institutional fact—a public name-using practice. For the notion of metasemantics, see Burgess & Sherman, eds., (2014).

⁸⁶ Cf. Searle (1995)

Conversely (9) is only true in virtue of instances like (13). However, the relation is asymmetrical, in the sense that any instance like (13) presupposes (9), but (9) does not presuppose any particular instance like (13)—only that there be some. On the one hand, the fact of semantic reference (9) and the mere fact of speaker reference (10), are essentially interdependent and equally fundamental. On the other, any particular fact of speaker reference like (13) depends on the general fact of semantic reference (9), though the converse does not hold.

A CRS like (9) states a relation of reference between a proper name and its bearer. This is a relation of semantic reference. It does not state anything about speakers use of the name to refer to that bearer. But it essentially depends on such facts. Conversely, a statement of speaker reference like (13) involves a three-place relation between speaker, name, and object. The relation between speaker and object essentially includes a place for the name, *qua* way of referring. And a speaker's referential relation to the referent of the name he uses to speak about it is not separable from a referential relation between name and object. So they're mutually interdependent, but not equivalent. The relation between name and bearer and the relation between speaker and bearer are different relations, as (9) and (10) express different facts.

It's crucial to keep the two referential relations apart, even as we recognize their essential interdependence. A word does not refer as words don't speak of or talk about their referents; rather, speakers do by means of the word. On the other hand, Frazier only speaks of Ali, when he utters (14) in virtue of the fact that "Ali stands for Ali"—a fact that is not brought into being this context of utterance or any other, unlike demonstrative referents. And as words don't speak of their referents, speakers don't stand for the referents. We do not speak Ali; we speak of Ali, in speaking of him as "Ali." A speaker does not *stand for* Ali, when he *refers to* Ali by using a name that stands for Ali. And a name "Ali" does not refer to (speak of) Ali, when a speaker uses "Ali" to refer to (speak of) Ali. To capture the difference, I suggest a terminology of "stands to" for the relation of speaker reference, and "stands for" for the relation of semantic reference: a speaker *stands to* an object when he refers to it with a name that *stands for* it.

Moreover the utility of a CRS in specifying the conditions of correctness depends in part on its independence from the content of any particular act of speaker reference, though not all. In specifying the contribution of "Ali" to the correctness conditions of Frazier's utterance of

(14) Ali is a chump

(9) does not advert to any aspect peculiar to the speaker's act of reference. For any competent utterance of the form "Ali is F", it is true iff the referent of "Ali" is F—for all speakers, the contribution is the same. When Frazier and Foreman both utter that sentence, the contents of the utterances could be the same. As (9) is more

fundamental than any given act of speaker reference like (14) we should not relativize a CSR for a proper name to any given context of use. For its fundamental contribution is independent of any particular pair of speakers and hearers. Unlike the CSR of a demonstrative, which must be relativized to context of use, and so include at least mention of a speaker, the CSR of a name should not be—for any given context of utterance for does not constitutively determine the reference and understanding of a name.

But we might want to relativize a CSR to its proprietary practice. In a way, we must, considering that any sense and reference a name in a CSR has is constitutively determined by its essential situation in its practice. As a CSR of the form (9) only means anything wrt to its practice, the difference between its instances in two wholly distinct practices (Muhammad and Laila Ali, e.g.) turns on the difference in practices. So the truth of any instance of (9) must be relativized to practice. But once relativized, no further contextual relativization need accompany it. Although practice determines the reference in any context it contains, each context does not determine reference anew, unlike demonstratives and indexicals. The contribution to any context is fixed by its occurrence within practice. To account for any act of speaker's reference, we must advert to its practice:

(20) "Ali" stands for Ali, w.r.t. the proprietary "Ali"-practice.

The individuation of proper names must advert to practice, for it determines both sense and reference. This allows us to differentiate both "Ali" from "Clay" and "Ali" (Muhammad) from "Ali" (Laila).

So we could say that reference is fundamentally a three-place relation (or four, following Bach, who includes a hearer), and that we keep a separate CSR for its utility, while bearing in mind its essential connection to speakers via practice. In that case, a statement of semantic reference like (9) and a statement of speaker reference like (13) would both be equally incomplete sans completion by the other. Instead we give priority to something like

(21) A speaker S uses "Ali" to refer to Ali in speaking to a hearer H

over a statement of semantic reference like (9).

Or we could resist this move, keep the distinct relations separate, and situate their essential interdependence in the context of the proprietary practice. In a way, practice is the equalizer between the respective roles of semantic reference and speaker reference, in relying in equal measure on the same practice. This is untouched by the differences between them. For (21) is no different from (10), except in making it explicit. And (9) and (10), though distinct relations, are equally fundamental and interdependent. But (9) is more fundamental than any particular instance of speaker reference: all speaker references involving an utterance of a

sentence of the form (14) presuppose the same semantic reference (9), but the latter does not presuppose any one of them.

22. In maintaining distinct but interdependent referential relations between proper names and their bearers, on the one hand, and speakers who use a proper name to refer to its bearer, on the other, I set myself up against Kent Bach, who countenances only one referential relation. By Bach's standards, the four-place relation in which a speaker S uses a term t to refer to an audience A to an object o is the only referential relation there is.⁸⁷ His ground for this claim is what he calls "the embarrassingly simple argument" that for any given occurrence of a singular term of any kind (indexical, demonstrative, or proper name) it has non-referential uses that are nonetheless "literal." Because the meaning of one of these is constant irrespective of a referential or non-referential use, Bach concludes that there is no referential relation between words and objects. Radicalizing Strawson's (1950) seminal insight that it is speakers who refer, not the words they use, Bach denies even that terms stand in referential relations relative to a context of use.

I agree with him, at least for demonstratives, that nothing seems to be gained by holding that relative to a given use, a speaker uses "that" to refer to o; and that relative to a speaker's given use of "that" to refer to o, "that" refers to o. This certainly seems otiose. But my grounds for agreement turn on the considerations of the essentially context bound reference, understanding, and content of demonstrative reference, rather than a view of its constant literal meaning.

But with proper names, I recommend we resist Bach's conclusion (I discuss what he takes to be their literal meaning below). One major reason is one I have stressed in describing the rational structure of proper names, structurally distinct from other devices of singular reference. The reference of a given use of a name is not fixed anew in every context of use, but is constant across them. It is not simply that, relative to a given use, S uses "NN" to refer to x. Rather it is that that a speaker's reference is like innumerable other cases, in which a given use of "NN" has x as its referent. What makes countless uses of "Obama" a proper name for a particular person across countless contexts of use is precisely that its reference is not essentially fixed by every context of use, but constant across those that occur within its practice. What ties a given use in context to its fixed referent, we have seen, are the informational relations rationally relating the speaker, in her given use, to the fixed referent. When I say "Obama is F" and you say "Obama is G" part of the reason we both refer to the same individual is by virtue of an independent relation of semantic reference, untethered to any given act of speaker reference. It is part of the explanation why the same individual bears the name "Obama" across contexts of use that the relation of semantic reference is thus independent.

⁸⁷ Bach (2006)

Moreover, it is a great source of the value and utility of proper names⁸⁸ as a distinct class of singular terms that the reference, understanding, and content of any given use is not essentially tied to a successful act of speaker reference. One major upshot of this is that allows for many more modes of gathering and transmitting information about its object carried across contexts by speakers' files.

Names are able to fulfill this function across contexts, absent a demonstrative identification every time out, by virtue of the continuity of its content in various contexts throughout its practice. This is underpinned by the networks of information tied to a single piece of knowledge constitutive of the name's semantic reference. The variety of ways a use of a name invokes information is a function of the bond between the multifarious information channels making up the network, organized by producer's knowledge, which any given use could tap into in equally many ways depending on the rational standing of the speaker in the practice.

One more point. By tying the reference of any given use of a proper name—such as it is, in Bach's exiguous sense—to a successful act of speaker reference, Bach belies the reality of reference by raising the bar too high. He imposes a requirement on the obtaining of the four-place relation that both the speaker and hearer understand the reference by entertaining the singular thought it expresses. But as we have seen, names might maintain their reference even in the face of a speaker's inability to understand the singular thought it expresses, and even when speaker reference fails altogether. For example, possessed only with "a planet" for "Pluto," a speaker is not capable of singular thought by Bach's standards and most others. Consequently, Bach is committed to relegating her utterance of "Pluto is F" to the realm of reference failure. Binding the conditions of reference for any use of a proper name whatsoever to the success of a particular act of speaker reference—requiring, as it does, a singular thought about its reference—flies in the face of the fact that speakers can refer to what they cannot understand. They do so by exploiting links on a reference-preserving chain, established independently of the success of the given act of speaker reference, and capable of availing itself of the semantic properties it preserves independently of understanding. I therefore reject the exclusivity of Bach's four-place relation, instead reserving distinct but interlocking roles for the two relations of reference attending a proper name.

It is vital to recognize, then, that the referential relation expressed by a CSR is a rational relation, imbued with semantic properties essentially tied to act of references but independent of any given one. It is true or false, correct or incorrect, according to its answerability to practice. The correctness of "Ali is F" depends on the referent of "Ali" being F, and nothing else. Hence the correctness of "Ali stands for Ali" depends on its expressing the correct condition of reference. So the CSR relation is inherently rational. Its "inferential role" is inseparable from its referential relation—not merely causally, but rationally. What a CRS (9) semantically expresses is a referential relation between name and object. This is its immediate subject matter. But it makes it answerable to the practice in which reference is determined

⁸⁸ Strawson (1970)

and upheld by the intentional activity of speakers. So the correctness of (9) depends on the rational norms set by the speakers of its proprietary practice.

Following Quine's lead and reflecting on a CSR reveals its subject matter to be a particular semantic fact, viz., a reference relation between name and bearer, whose correctness-conditions are determined by the practice to which it is thus answerable to, and subject to epistemic norms set by the same standard of answerability to practice. This elicits how speaker reference and semantic reference for a proper name are essentially interdependent despite being distinct.

23. Individuation

I propose we identify a proper name by the practice which confers its content. To precisify the relevant the notion of practice, we can work with a broadly Stalnakerian notion of context as sets of presuppositions that are 'common ground'⁸⁹ As I mentioned above, a proper-name using practice is the set of contexts of use, both actual and possible, controlled by a presupposition of producer's knowledge. The presupposition assumes different forms, depending on the status of the participant. While it will be presupposed in varying degrees, what is common ground is the presupposition of participation in the relevant practice it underpins. This is a presupposition common to everyone who uses the name to participate in the practice. Every intentional use of a proper name, not seeking to start from scratch, presupposes that its bearer is so-called by those who know the name.

To accommodate this commonality among all participants in the practice, we can appeal to Garcia-Carpintero's extension of the scope of common ground to include "shared commitments"⁹⁰ other than presupposition of the same propositions. And it is in this extended sense that the presupposition of producer's knowledge is common ground to all participants, whether explicitly known to them or not. A practice is characterized by the shared commitment of using "NN" as a name for what those whose use one wishes to share know it to be. Even participants who do not possess this knowledge as such, nonetheless in their intentional utterances involving "NN" undertake a commitment to continuing its use, simply to the extent that they intend to continue the use of the name rather than discontinue it, by participating in the practice from which their associated information derives. So consumers, not knowing the single piece of producer's knowledge informing their practice are beholden to it, insofar as they use "NN", or intend to so use it, as it has been used—an intention which turns them toward the practice, as they draw on information associated with the name in fulfilling their intention. They are thus beholden to the standards of the practice defined by this shared commitment.

It is on this ground that a proper name is identified by its practice, which is in turn constituted by producer's knowledge and the activity it informs—intentional acts of

⁸⁹ Stalnaker (1978, 2002, 2014)

⁹⁰ Garcia-Carpintero (2015)

utterance whose organizing principle is producer's knowledge, in the sense that they presuppose a shared commitment to participate in the practice defined by producer's knowledge in undertaking to continue the established use of the name. A practice of using "NN" for x is differentiated from others by the networks of information constrained by its principle of producer's knowledge. The various trajectories of information channels issuing from the intentional activity of the parties to the practice are set upon these various streams by producers' knowledge. The trajectory of information hinges on how this knowledge is manifested in the activities it animates. Despite sharing an object, "Hesperus" and "Phosphorus" are separate practices, insofar as the networks of information generated by one are rationally separated from the other. Specifically, information from one provides no reason to be included in the other. That a piece of information becomes associated with "Hesperus" does not itself encourage inclusion in a corresponding "Phosphorus"-file. And this reflects their different principles of knowledge, and the presuppositions they import.

To continue with the example above, "Ali" qua proper name for MA and "Ali" qua proper name for LA are different names, as they are particular to distinct bearers in two practices differentiated by separate networks of information, issuing from the distinct pieces of knowledge which inform all intentional activity involving the name. The systematic divergence in rational powers, owing to two practices distinguished by the different knowledge informing their activity and their network, is the fundamental rationale for holding the content of a proper name for a particular person apart from the content of a proper name for another particular person—alike only in their use of the same sign or vocable in assigning a proper name to a particular bearer.

When a range of given uses of "David" (e.g.) have nothing in common with a range of given uses pertaining to another pattern of "David" uses, except that the vocable is the same, I regard that as good grounds for recognizing a difference in the semantic content of the names. Consider the range of uses where thought and talk involving "David" do so as a name for David Kaplan, as opposed to one for the 10th-century Bulgarian noble, a notable jazz pianist, a certain street in Staten Island, a particular pet gold fish, and so on. As what they have in common does not affect their systematic differences in the contribution each name makes to the rational patterns in thought and action distinctive of their competent use in a range of intentional utterances and thoughts involving it, I do not find much use in maintaining a principle of individuation based on the one commonality untouched by these differences.

In this way, the principle of individuation I propose is continuous with Kaplan's criteria for dividing names according to "continuity in inter- and intra-personal intentions" attending its use.⁹¹ One way of regarding the regimentation of rational powers I recommend is as a way of fleshing out the kind of patterns involved in

⁹¹ Kaplan (1990)

Kaplan's criteria. Apart from the considerations adduced above, another merit of this kind of approach is that it is in keeping with perhaps the most plausible principle for the individuation of words in general, differentiating them according to phonology and semantics.⁹² Put simply, then, I individuate a proper name according to its sound and sense. Two occurrences of "NN" are occurrences of the same name if they are alike in this way. So there is no need to justify deviating from good general principles of individuation.. We maintain the defining role of the vocable in the identity of any given name, without privileging this feature. Given the significance of the differences between two names alike only in this way, I see no need to relegate them to a secondary role while elevating this common property of the word to a principle of specifically semantic individuation.

We can address the commonality among all uses of a vocable as a proper name for a particular individual in terms of Kaplan's notion of a generic name, which is roughly a stock symbol, like an uninterpreted variable, which features with varying frequencies among the kind of symbols commonly used in naming practices prevalent in various linguistic communities. So I treat the vocable "David" as a generic expression, distinguished thus from any and all occurrences of "David" as a proper name for a certain particular. There is, however, no requirement that a particular proper name be pulled from a common stock of generic names. And indeed it seems to me that a symbol which first comes into being as a particular proper name might thereby implicitly introduce a corresponding generic name—or the possibility of one, if needed—isolable by abstracting the vocable from its assignment to an object as bearer.

Moreover, there seem to be no restrictions on the superficial form a proper name could assume provided it fulfills the fundamental function of a name (Carroll). So for example "the Manassa Mauler" is a name for Jack Dempsey, despite having the superficial grammar of a definite description. For the descriptive content of these words is effectively irrelevant to the fundamental functioning of the name in at least two senses. First, it does not serve to fix its referent; and, second, it need not play any part in understanding. Merely by virtue of knowing a particular individual so-called does this function as a proper name, and the representational properties of the individual words need carry nothing more than etymological significance here. On such grounds, I regard proper names, in general, as semantically simple.

One way we might bring this criteria to bear on the status of a typical combination of a first and last name, standard in most Western countries, is to put the combination as a whole in the default role of defining its practice. What will determine the viability of this depends on whether those speakers who know an individual by each separate part will also know the same individual by the whole, so that the information that gets associated with either piece of the name or the whole will all be filed into the same dossier. This will determine rationally related networks of information, with shared presuppositions, applicable to the full name or

⁹² Pinker & Bloom (1990)

one of its pieces. As long as such a situation remains in place, I regard both elements of the name as parts of the whole, rather than detachable parts with semantic properties particular to each. Conversely, other speakers might only know one part or the other, or only recognize them together, or know each piece in isolation from the other without knowledge of shared reference. They can be seen as occupying a semi-autonomous segment of the practice to the extent they fit information coming from each name-fragment into separate files. Such a situation might come to constitute its own practice if shared among users in this way. But in the limiting case, it could also be a feature of a speaker's idiolect, perhaps only permitting partial participation in the practice.

24. On this basis I would counsel caution in classifying what Soames calls 'partially descriptive names' (PDNs),⁹³ within the taxonomy of proper names, to the extent that they deviate from such classificatory criteria driving it. The paradigmatic examples in this category include such specimens as "Senator Clinton," "Princeton University," and "Mt. Everest." As his label suggests, Soames adopts a hybrid semantics here, according to which the semantic content is at once Millian in its inclusion of the referent of the proper name component and descriptive in its inclusion of the content of the general term concatenated with the name.

Now, there seem to me to be several kinds of considerations that militate against including this category in a taxonomy of proper names.

First, to the extent that the descriptive term does not contribute to the fixation of reference, its status as a proper name is questionable. For the reference of "Senator Clinton," such as it is, does not emerge from an individual's satisfaction of the property of being a senator. To be clear, the correct application of the whole might depend on the referent of "Clinton" satisfying "_senator." But the reference is fixed independently of it, and does not depend on its continued satisfaction. To wit: Clinton is no longer a senator and yet the reference remains the same, as it pivots entirely on that of the name. Moreover, the referent need not continue to satisfy the descriptive term for the continued application of it. To shift the example slightly, although she is no longer Secretary of State, she nonetheless is often addressed as "Secretary Clinton."

Second, insofar as understanding hinges only on knowing the name, the descriptive component is in that way extraneous. As before, this is not to deny that understanding "Senator Clinton" involves understanding the general term. It is rather to query whether such content should figure in understanding it *as a distinct name*, rather than understanding the descriptive predicate that happens to modify a name one already understands. For example a speaker competent with "Clinton" might fail to understand a given "the redoubtable Clinton", by virtue of not understanding "redoubtable." But this in no way compromises her competence with "Clinton" in general or in this particular modification.

⁹³ Soames (2002: Ch.5)

Third, another way to assess whether a PDN should count as a proper name is to ask whether it creates a genuine contrast in the statuses of “Clinton” and “Senator Clinton” as two distinct proper names, alike in reference, but separated in their semantics by the description. One reason to suppose that they do not oppose each other as distinct names hinges on whether each one creates distinct networks of information, with information tied to one filling a separate file from information tied to the other. But to the extent that what figures in the one file figures in the other, including “senator” as perhaps a prominent piece of information, that provides further grounds for reserving the status.

On the whole, then, it does not seem that we should assimilate all the various titles and terms of address to its own distinct category of proper name, rather than treating them as incidental modifications of to a pre-existing name applicable in some circumstances but not others. As such, we do not create a new name when we affix a title to it; rather we simply modify the old one.

25. Now the kind of approach I am recommending contrasts with another predominant one, Metalinguistic Descriptivism (MLD), according to which the content of a proper is a metalinguistic description including its own quotation. It is an approach to the semantics of proper names that treats a name “N” as semantically equivalent to the incomplete description “bearer of ‘N’⁹⁴ or a cognate general term extensionally equivalent to “__entity called ‘N,’” where “N” essentially includes its phonological properties⁹⁵ For Burge names are count nouns used predicatively. In referential uses, this predicate either combines with “the” to reach its reference as a definite description (Bach) or combines with an unspoken demonstrative “that” (Burge). For example, “Obama smokes” would be treated either as “[The] Obama smokes” or “[That] Obama smokes.”

A major aim is to provide a uniform account of both referential and non-referential uses. In Burge’s examples, the contrast is between the occurrence of “Alfred” in (1) and those in (2-6).

- (1) Alfred studied at Princeton,
- (2) There are relatively few Alfreds in Princeton
- (3) Some Alfreds are crazy
- (4) An Alfred Russell joined the club today
- (5) The Alfred who joined the club today is a baboon
- (6) There are three Alfreds in our department.

In (1) the function of “Alfred” is unmodified singular reference to a particular person; in (2) a numerical modifier; in (3) modification by an existential quantifier;

⁹⁴ Bach (1981 2002 2016)

⁹⁵ Burge 1973. And where it exists, perhaps also its orthography: see Elbourne (2005: Ch.6) Matushansky (2008)

in (4) the indefinite article; in (5) the definite; and in (6) more numerical modification.

The MLD theorist aspires for uniformity by treating “Alfred” as a metalinguistic predicate, used referentially by forming either a definite description or a complex demonstrative, or used predicatively as it is modified in these other cases. The predicativist challenge to all who resist such an assimilation is to account for these other cases without sacrificing the “literal” meaning of the name.⁹⁶

Now, I agree that the occurrences in (2-6) are all predicative and metalinguistic. But on this basis, I also deny that (1) must be treated as a referential use of the same metalinguistic predicate. My first response to the predicativist challenge, then, is to question whether the occurrence of “Alfred” in the non-referential range of examples does feature the same name as that which figures in the referential case. I suggest that we treat each kind of case as involving essentially different words, of a different kind, on two fundamental grounds. First, the subject matter or topic is fundamentally different in each kind of case; second, the conditions for understanding systematically diverge. In (2)-(6), the contribution of “Alfred” is entirely metalinguistic. The subject matter of (3) is essentially a relation between the property of being called “Alfred” and the property of being crazy, such that there are instances at the intersection of the two. Describing it in this way suggests its semantics are that of binary quantification. By contrast, (1) centers on reference to a particular individual in an instance of singular predication. Whereas the semantic significance of (3) is neither object-dependent, nor are its truth-conditions singular, this is not so for (1). Second, their conditions for understanding diverge accordingly. Apprehension of the metalinguistic predicate is all that understanding any of (2)-(6) requires. But understanding (1) does require identifying a reference, and cannot be conferred by apprehension of the metalinguistic property alone.

But this is not the case otherwise. Understanding “Someone called ‘Alfred’ is here”, and treating it as what is expressed by an utterance “Alfred is here,” by itself can fail to confer understanding of that utterance. As I discussed earlier, it is not effectively different from confronting an utterance with an indexical pronoun, like “She is wise”, knowing only that “she” refers to some female. As understanding requires identifying the reference, rather than merely knowing the conventional meaning of “she” in English, so does understanding an “Alfred”-utterance require identifying reference rather than merely recognizing the vocable as a name. We can allow that recognition of the latter suffices for grasp of the metalinguistic content. But that just elicits how little that leaves us in the way of understanding.

And while they aim to secure singular understanding either descriptively or demonstratively, it is questionable how significant the metalinguistic predicate is in securing it. On the one hand, we have the expressly metalinguistic cases of (2)-(6). The conditions for understanding “Alfred” in each is indeed the same, relying on

⁹⁶ Fara (2014) is most explicit about this defining aim.

nothing more than the metalinguistic property. On the other, understanding any case of singular reference like (1) always requires more than that, specifically, the identification of a reference. Now, every individual called “Alfred” is alike in that way alone, but understanding an instance of any one always requires going beyond. Moreover, the similarities stop there—as the rational powers constitutive of competence with any given one are separate.

My inclination, then, is to treat the range of cases involving numerical modification or pluralization of a vocable like “Alfred” as the uniform use of a metalinguistic predicate, on the one hand, and treat each instance of “Alfred” as a proper name for a particular individual as their own distinct but homonymous name on the other, on account of these deep and sweeping differences in conditions of understanding.

For all that, I think MLD is right to stress the relevance of the property of being an individual so-called to the apparatus of proper names in two central ways. In one way this property is absolutely central to the emergence of reference in a practice; and understanding any given use of a proper name cannot do without it either. That said, it cannot be what fixes reference nor what determines that of a given use. Second, it is central to understanding in being a necessary *presupposition* of the truth of any instance of “NN is F.” It might also suffice to confer the status of parasitic consumerism on a speaker as well. But apart from that, it is hard to see how much farther the metalinguistic predicate can take us in understanding.

One final point is that it is great virtue of a proper name that it is not essentially context-bound, in the various ways discussed. By making the understanding of a given (‘referring’) use of a proper name essentially reliant on its immediate context of use—either through the completion of a definite description or in the creation of a complex demonstrative—unduly restricts the range of reference characteristic of a proper name, and imposes conditions on understanding that need not always be met for understanding.

The Status of Descriptive Names

Something of the unreal is necessary to fecundate the real.

Wallace Stevens⁹⁷

I must never presume to opine, without knowing at least something by means of which the judgment, in itself merely problematic, secures connection with truth, a connection which, although not complete, is yet more than arbitrary fiction.

Immanuel Kant⁹⁸

1. Introduction

A descriptive name (DN) is a name whose reference is fixed by a descriptive stipulation. Schematically: “let ‘NN’ stand for the F,” where “NN” bears the superficial grammar of a name in the relevant language and purports to stand for a single object, determined as whatever uniquely satisfies “the F.” The latter consists of uniquely identifying descriptive content—either a single definite description or a cluster of descriptions, at least a significant number of which are supposed to be uniquely instantiated by whatever is to bear the name. Although Kripke and Evans both hold in general that the reference of an ordinary proper name is not descriptively determined, they recognize the possibility of a name so introduced and consider what they take to be some actual, albeit rare, examples. Kripke classifies “Neptune” and “Jack the Ripper” as DNs, while Evans mentions “Deep Throat” and “Deutero-Isiah” in addition to his illustrative example, “Julius.”⁹⁹

Subsequent semantic accounts of DNs have broadly ranged over three types of position.¹⁰⁰ There is the position that takes off from Kripke’s original line that though there are some novel elements introduced by DNs, we need not suppose that their effect carries over to the rigid designator status of DNs or their semantics. These are reasonable points, as far as they go. The first position, as I shall characterize it, consists in going further than this, without obvious epistemic license. These *soi-disant* followers of Kripke do not appear to countenance any current cognitive constraints created by the distinctive epistemic status of descriptive-reference fixing. Instead, they embrace a generalized semantic and cognitive

⁹⁷ Stevens (1934/1957: 256)

⁹⁸ Kant (1781/1965: B646)

⁹⁹ Kripke (1972/1980), Evans (1979, 1982). There are numerous other contrived examples of DNs in the philosophical literature all following the same pattern, irrespective of their semantics. Cf. Reimer’s (2004) “Eve,” Salmon’s (1988) “Nappy-O” and Curly-O,” and Devitt’s (1981) “Oscar” for a representative sampling cutting across ideological lines. Johnston (2009: 4-10) argues that “God” is real-world example of a DN.

¹⁰⁰ A fourth position might be denying the possibility of descriptive reference-fixing altogether. Kim (1977) pushes this line.

assimilation between singular terms formed by either procedure of reference-fixing, irrespective of the epistemic differences between the two.¹⁰¹

The other two positions are divided over the semantic role of the reference-fixing description. On one side, descending from Evans, the name and the (rigidified) description are regarded as semantically on par with each other.¹⁰² In his example, statements of the form “Julius is F” are semantically equivalent to those of “The [actual] unique inventor of the zip is F.” Analogously, the thoughts expressed by a competent sentential utterance of one of these will match the content (or a substantial core of it) of the other. Acquiring understanding of a DN, too, if not consisting of a grasp of the reference-fixing description exactly, cannot deviate too far from it. Descriptively constituted in this way, Evans does not regard these thoughts as object-dependent, in contrast to what he regards as the object-dependence of ordinary proper names. If nothing answers to “the [actual] inventor of the zip” the propositional content expressed by all “Julius”-utterances remains intact in virtue of the prior intelligibility of the description. While these thoughts are thereby general, he nevertheless regards DNs as referring on the grounds secured by the rigidified descriptions responsible for reference-fixing. This ensures that a DN contributes one and the same object to the truth-conditions of its utterances, provided it contributes any object at all.

The third position, descending from Donnellan, denies that DNs have a descriptive semantics. Consequently they hold that utterances of the DN are capable of expressing singular reference and thought, but with the curious twist that the singular propositions or thoughts thus *expressed* are presently incapable of being *entertained* or otherwise understood as such. That is, although “DN is F” is capable of expressing a singular proposition, it is incapable of being understood by those speakers who in every other respect outwardly appear to exercise this competence with it. If no object is ever discovered or ruled out, understanding is never reached.¹⁰³

Now the question I wish to address is whether descriptive names ought to be classified with ordinary proper names in a shared semantic and cognitive grouping. With respect to the semantic question, I maintain the theoretical possibility (if not actual occasional occurrence) that DNs, like ordinary proper names and indeed singular terms generally, have non-descriptive meanings capable of deployment in genuine singular reference and thought. I shall argue nevertheless that the epistemic peculiarities distinctive of DNs thwart any prospect of a complete cognitive assimilation with the class of proper names. I close by suggesting the bearing of these points on the Kripkean contingent *a priori*.

¹⁰¹ Harman (1977), Kaplan (1989), and Jeshion (2004)

¹⁰² Evans (op. cit.), Davies (1981), Recanati (1993), Stanley (2002), and Reimer (2004).

¹⁰³ Donnellan (1979), Bach (1987), Salmon (1988), and Soames (1995, 2006) all espouse this view.

2. Ordinary proper names (e.g. “Gareth,” “Obama,” “Pittsburgh”) do not denote their respective bearers in virtue of their bearers satisfying any description. Instead, a proper name comes to stand for its object because that object has been assigned that name as its bearer.¹⁰⁴ For instance, the practice of using the vocable “Gareth” as a name for a particular individual, such as Gareth Evans, arose from its assignment to that individual as his name. Further, a speaker’s ability to use “Gareth” to express thoughts about Evans does not require her possession of a definite description true of him. To be sure, successful reference does require speakers to know who or what bears the name they employ with understanding, and this involves their possession of some information ultimately answerable to the bearer of the name. But the semantic content of the name itself is exhausted by its standing for its bearer, and understanding consists solely in this single piece of knowledge arrived at in countless ways. Descriptive content, then, does not mediate reference and understanding, or figure in the semantic content of proper names.

The upshot is that declarative sentences containing the name in subject position are true just in case one and the same object assigned that name satisfies the predicate. And this underlies the rigidity of names; i.e., its assigned referent is invariant as it figures in actual and counterfactual discourse alike. However, this comes at the risk of the object-dependence of meaning and understanding. If a name lacks a bearer, there is no current assignment of reference, the name is bereft of an object to contribute to truth-conditions, and there is nothing that would count as knowing which object bears the name. Summing up these programmatic remarks: the reference, meaning, understanding, and thought characteristic of a proper name are not descriptively constituted or determined; and while this allows for rigidity and uniqueness of reference, it also requires the existence of a referent. In consequence, the thought expressed by a competent assertion of a sentence containing a proper name in subject position is apt to be singular, existence-dependent, and unmediated.

By contrast, very many definite descriptions, on a roughly Russellian (quantificational) reading, are neither rigid, singular, existence-dependent, nor unmediated. Unlike “Aristotle,” “the teacher of Alexander” will stand toward its object (if any) by the relation of satisfaction, rather than assignment. Consequently, it is not rigid: which object happens to satisfy it will vary according to the world of evaluation. It is intelligible in terms of the words that compose it, such that its meaning is available independently of any object answering to it. Whereas understanding a proper name requires knowing a particular object as the bearer of that name, understanding a definite description does not require knowing which object might happen to satisfy the description. Understanding a given use of a proper name is not separate from, or posterior to, knowledge of reference; understanding a definite description is, however. Further, if no object happens to satisfy it, the sentence is merely false rather than robbed of singular content altogether. All this renders the denotation, meaning, understanding, and thought

¹⁰⁴ Anscombe (1959:41-4), Kripke (op. cit.), among many others.

characteristic of a pure definite description non-rigid, general, existence-independent, and mediated in precisely the way it is not for proper names.

3. Now consider the case of a descriptive name. Its reference is stipulated to be fixed by whatever satisfies the definite description. To the extent that it can be said to stand for an object at all, it is in virtue of some object uniquely satisfying the description. Its reference is, by definition, descriptively determined. The epistemic standing of a user of a descriptive name does not include anything not already gained by understanding the definite description. In the case of both a definite description and the descriptive name determined by it, the speaker lacks any additional information relevant to the identification of a possible denotation. For a telling feature of descriptive names, at least the canonical examples in philosophy, is that they are introduced in circumstances of almost total ignorance about the identity of their bearers, if there are any at all. In each case, the description is given in the absence of any other relevant mode of identification that would allow speakers to single out a particular object as uniquely instantiating the property expressed by the description. So the kind of descriptive content that shapes descriptive names are “pure” or “attributive”—definite descriptions for which the relevant speakers do not yet know (and, in some cases, even believe), concerning some particular object, that it fits them. This suggests that the primary function and utility of a descriptive name is a device for speaking about the possibility of an object that uniquely instantiates the property expressed by the description, independently of any other means of singling it out.

These features might seem to support a much closer semantic kinship between DNs and definite descriptions than with proper names. And there is an understandable temptation to regard the semantics of a DN as constituted by the descriptive content that fixes its reference. Evans writes:

someone who understands and accepts the one sentence as true gets himself into exactly the same belief state as someone who accepts the other...We do not produce new thoughts (new beliefs) by a ‘stroke of a pen’ (in Grice’s phrase)—simply by introducing a name in the language.¹⁰⁵

And Recanati concurs:

*The same descriptive thought is involved whether we use the description or the name, because this thought is the only one available to the thinker...I conclude that the reference of a descriptive name is thought of descriptively [emphasis in original].*¹⁰⁶

A major obstacle to assimilating descriptive names to the class of proper names generally is that we seem to seek a transformation of purely general and mediated content (the reference-fixing description) to singular and unmediated content (the

¹⁰⁵ Evans (1982: 50)

¹⁰⁶ Recanati (1993:177)

descriptive name), by a mere 'stroke of the pen.' If a particular pure definite description is general and mediated, how, in the absence of any other information about a possible unique satisfier, are we to effect singular reference and thought by the introduction of a descriptive name? If, for example, "The murderer of these prostitutes is on the loose" expresses a general and mediated thought, what makes "Jack the Ripper is on the loose" singular and unmediated when no further identifying knowledge pertains to the name?

Nevertheless, it would be rash at this stage to assume that a descriptive name must have a descriptive semantics. If the meaning, understanding, and thought involved with a proper name whose reference is fixed by ostension are apt to express singular and unmediated content, might the same hold, at least sometimes, for descriptive assignments of reference? Singular reference and thought *via* a proper name require that an initial assignment take place, securing a unique reference, capable of being transmitted on a reference-preserving chain through the *de re* referential intentions of competent speakers. If the assignment is successfully established and maintained, speakers will be able to express non-descriptive and object-dependent thought-contents about the referent of the name, without an intermediary identification of the bearer of the name as the unique satisfier of some description. If both ostensive and descriptive assignments can achieve this, at least some of the time, then some descriptive names would appear to be on the semantic level of proper names *simpliciter*.

4. The Possibility of Descriptive-Reference Fixing

Perhaps we can countenance the possibility of genuine singular reference for DNs along the following lines. As is now familiar, a DN acquires a bearer just in case its reference-fixing definite description denotes. Assuming unique existence, the description serves to single out a potential object of thought and reference. In introducing or acquiring a DN as a singular term, speakers must be in a position to intend to think and talk about the denotation of the definite description, without the mediation of its descriptive content. This is to treat whatever satisfies the description (if anything) as itself constituting an assignment of reference to the name. If the description turns out to be uniquely satisfied, the end result is the same as reference-fixing through ostension. Unlike the ostensive case, however, this highlights the essentially *conditional assignment* of reference to the expression one hopes to use as a name. That is, the assignment cannot circumvent the proviso of unique existence. This is crucially important for all subsequent dealings with the name; but having registered it, nothing else necessarily appears to impede the formation of the *de re* referential intentions with which one hopes to put the name to use.

One immediate consequence would be to separate the DN from the definite description, by severing the characteristic conditions of application of the latter from the former. The semantic difference between the name and the description would then turn on the position speakers put themselves in by employing the DN

with *de re* referential intentions directed toward the assigned referent. What this comes to, at a minimum, is that they regard sentences of the form “DN is F” as true if and only if the referent of “DN” is F.

The decision to treat a DN as singular has the effect of introducing a genuine proper name, as opposed to an abbreviation of the description, and this generates the risk of object-dependence attendant on proper names generally. If one is willing to take this risk, in the face of sweeping epistemic ignorance of a possible denotation, there appear to be in principle no necessary obstacles to entertaining a singular thought, expressible by coupling the name with a predicate in the utterance of a declarative sentence. Provided that a unique satisfier exists, one might be able to come to possess and exercise a capacity for singular reference and thought, without any increase in knowledge not already afforded by the limited understanding of the definite description. For instance, one can entertain the singular thought expressed by “Neptune is G,” as well as a variety of other propositional attitudes—believing, hoping, fearing, etc.—with that singular thought as the content of the attitude.

If this is possible at all, it seems that the same end could be achieved without coining a name, but simply using the description with stipulated referential intentions. So in the case of “Jack the Ripper,” the meaning of “the murderer of these prostitutes” would cease to be specificatory, becoming strictly denotative instead. The general idea would be to use the description (or what now merely has the superficial grammar of a description) to refer to what in fact satisfies it, but without drawing on an understanding of its parts. Whether a speaker understood the original description or not, then, would be incidental to her ability to refer with it.¹⁰⁷ One advantage conferred by coining a descriptive name to use instead of the wordier referential description is that it would allow for economy of expression, but without the descriptive name being an abbreviation for the description. More significantly, the use of the name in this way would also signal that the description does not express an essential property of the individual who happens to instantiate it. As being the teacher of Alexander is not an essential property of Aristotle, so is being the murderer of those prostitutes not essential to the identity of Jack the Ripper.

Suppose one were to ask, “Who is the murderer of these prostitutes?” Responding to the question with “the murderer of these prostitutes” is evidently not an informative answer. But if “Jack the ripper” could constitute an informative answer, what is the additional source of information? Someone who only understands “The murderer of these prostitutes” could learn “Jack the Ripper” by being told that it stands for whoever might fit that description. And that would constitute a slight increase in her semantic knowledge: she understands “Jack the ripper” in addition

¹⁰⁷ The best known proposal in this general area is Kaplan’s *dthat* operator, which transforms a definite description into a singular indexical by “rigidifying” the descriptive content, i.e. by treating its denotation as actual (Kaplan, 1978). The only constraint Kaplan imposes on this is the unavoidable presumption of unique existence for the description, discussed above. His example of “Newman-1” is a descriptive name for the actual unique satisfier of “the first child born in the 21st century (Kaplan, 1977/1989: 521).

to understanding “the murderer of these prostitutes,” and knows that it applies to one and the same individual (if any). But this adds nothing to her knowledge of that individual or to the question of his/her existence. In learning the meaning of “Jack the ripper,” she still knows nothing about the identity of that individual (if any). Responding to “Who is Jack the Ripper?” with “Jack the Ripper” is now tantamount to the trivial response to the descriptive formulation of that question. Similarly, suppose someone understands “the teacher of Alexander” without having the faintest idea who satisfies it. She says things like “The teacher of Alexander is wise,” thereby expressing a general and mediated belief. But maybe she wants more. Specifically, she seeks the singular knowledge of who this individual is, with all the cognitive features this brings with it. In pursuit of this, she coins the descriptive name “Frank” to stand for whoever satisfies the description. So now she says, “Frank is wise” instead. To be sure, her understanding of “Frank” as whoever might be the teacher of Alexander does not constitute an increase in her knowledge of a possible denotation.

However, if she later discovers that *Aristotle* is the teacher of Alexander, things seem to change. Why does “Aristotle” rather than “Frank” offer a potentially informative answer to her question, “Who is the teacher of Alexander?” It tells her something she did not already know on the basis of her own semantic stipulations. If nothing uniquely satisfies “the teacher of Alexander,” then “Frank” is empty. By contrast, “the teacher of Alexander” could turn out to be empty or fit someone else, without undermining the ongoing use of “Aristotle” to refer to Aristotle. Unlike “Frank,” the reference of “Aristotle” doesn’t hinge essentially on its satisfying a certain definite description. There are many other informational links securing the reference of “Aristotle” apart from “the teacher of Alexander.” This equally allows for many more paths to understanding “Aristotle.” But the reference of “Frank” stands or falls according to its satisfaction of the definite description, which also limits access to understanding, sometimes severely. Even if something less than knowledge of the definite description would suffice for understanding a descriptive name, it would seem to circumscribe it much more narrowly than is ordinarily the case. By the same token, if “the murderer of these prostitutes” or “the planet causing these perturbations” turns out to be empty or satisfied by multiple bearers, “Jack the Ripper” or “Neptune” would become empty (referring to nothing).

5. These considerations might seem once more to press the question whether genuine singular reference is achievable on the epistemic basis of descriptive reference-fixing alone. Whereas understanding a proper name requires knowing a particular object as the bearer of that name, understanding a pure definite description neither necessitates knowing which object might happen to satisfy it nor does it bring such knowledge in its tow. As things stand, however, this is not yet known in the state of ignorance characteristic of the period (possibly permanent) prior to discovering whatever must be the attempted object of thought, if it is anything at all. So it might appear unclear how descriptive names could contribute to singular thought and talk, without revising one’s criteria for understanding a proper name so that ignorance of reference is not an impediment to it.

Rather than casting doubt on the very possibility that a DN might enjoy a *de re* status, however, it highlights the near-total epistemic limitations imposed by DNs. As I have stressed, the epistemic standing of a user of a DN does not include anything not already gained by understanding the definite description. In the case of both a definite description and the descriptive name determined by it, the speaker lacks any additional information relevant to the identification of a possible denotation. The fundamental contrast between ordinary proper names pivots on this point. The key cognitive peculiarity of DNs is not that they are incapable of employment in singular reference and thought. Rather, it is that the subjects who think them cannot yet know the singular thoughts they express.

For any descriptive name, “DN,” and any predicate, “F,” one does not know that DN is F, until one knows that the DN denotes. To know that a DN denotes is to know that something uniquely satisfies the definite description which fixes its reference. This is clearly precluded by the very structure of the setting in which DNs are introduced. Short of that, any statement involving the DN must be conditionally qualified by an assumption of unique existence. As one cannot know that “Neptune exists” is true, when one is openly ignorant of the very existence of Neptune, so one cannot yet know that Neptune is F for any other predicate “F”. If nothing in fact satisfies the reference-fixing description, the DN and all previous sentences containing it are empty. They express no singular content. But if it is contentful—if something does uniquely satisfy the definite—then speakers are in principle positioned to produce and respond to singular reference and thought by means of the name.

6. It might be objected that virtually any name, DN or not, runs the risk of being empty. If it could turn out that I do not know in fact know the reference of “Obama,” then despite seeming to have known it, that was purely illusory. In place of knowledge, there would only be the false belief that the name refers. If this is an epistemic possibility for ordinary proper names, what makes the difference in the case of DNs? For one thing, it is only an epistemic possibility for names that are not in fact known to begin with. At the point in which a speaker knows a name, this epistemic possibility has thereby become cut off. That said, for any name that is not in fact known, at present or permanently, but rather merely believed to have a certain reference, it is epistemically possible that no bearer exists. Imagine, for instance, that although I regard “Obama” as a non-empty name for the current President of the U.S., I have actually been suffering from a mass delusion and “Obama” is empty. Then all of the various singular statements of the form “Obama is F” would not express any singular thought at all, and, *a fortiori*, there would be no such singular thought to know. But if “Obama” isn’t empty, then I refer to Obama using the name, entertain singular thoughts expressible by it, and enjoy the potential of knowing them as well. Similarly, if a DN turns out to be empty, there would be only the illusion of singular reference and thought. But when it’s non-empty, it too is capable of singular reference and thought. On what grounds, then, could I be credited with knowing that Obama is F, which don’t at the same time provide a similar epistemic rationale for Leverrier knowing that Neptune is G?

As discussed, if we are to allow DNs to be assigned a reference, insofar as there might exist something uniquely satisfying the description, and a speaker wants to use it referentially, her understanding of the description suffices for understanding the name. This is enough to secure singular reference and thought, but only on the assumption of unique existence for the descriptive stipulation. As long as ignorance of reference remains unavoidable, however, this demands that the referential assignment of a DN is be conditional—standing in need of provisional qualification a that the definite descriptions turn out to be uniquely satisfied. A defining difference between a DN and an ordinary name, then, is that the latter need not make conditional assignments of reference, because it can be justifiably assured of the existence of a referent. Outside of hypothesis and fiction, we normally have no reason to doubt that the names we use have bearers. When the reference of a name is supposed to have been fixed by ostension rather than description, or one learns a name by exploiting the apparently perceptible presence of an object, there is a quite high, though defeasible, assurance that the name refers to that thing. Even in the absence of perceptual contact, as is the case for contemporary understanding of “Aristotle” (say), there are a number of contextual links tying various occurrences of the name to its bearer. Barring any special reason to question the existence of a bearer for a name we use with apparent understanding, we are generally justified in our beliefs that these names refer.

7. The Epistemic Status of a Descriptive Name

The difference between my understanding of “Obama” and Leverrier’s understanding of “Neptune” hangs on the present possibility of knowledge of existence in the first case, and the absence of that possibility, at present, in the second. For the various contextual relations linking my use of “Obama” to Obama — both perceptual and non-perceptual—justify my knowledge of the reference of “Obama.” For they consist of multifarious bodies of information and misinformation, perhaps only alike in being answerable to the actual referent of the name. This provides good epistemic grounds for attributing knowledge of existence to ordinary understanding of a name. So although it is epistemically possible that a name like “Obama” is empty, my belief that “Obama” refers to Obama will very often be justified on these epistemic grounds. The upshot is that when an ordinary name is non-empty, I will generally know that it has the reference it does. This enables me both to entertain and potentially to know singular thoughts expressed by “Obama.” By contrast, Leverrier’s hypothetical postulation of “Neptune” or “Vulcan” as whatever satisfies the so-and-so occurs precisely in the absence of knowing what, if anything, satisfies the stipulation. He is not yet in a position to know that Neptune or Vulcan exist, and so equally unable to know whether it refers. Again, this need not stop him from using “Neptune” to express and entertain singular thoughts, provided that it turns out not to be empty (*inter alia*). But as long as the referential

assignment remains conditional in this way, it does preclude him from gaining singular knowledge of Neptune.¹⁰⁸

It is a corollary of the peculiar epistemic standing of DNs that they lack the relatively high degree of assurance of knowledge of existence proper names enjoy. In the standard case of bestowing a name on a concrete object, the manner of naming is ostensive (as in Kripke's 'baptism'). Exploiting the apparently perceptible presence of an object, while obviously not infallible, does provide strong epistemic grounds for knowing the existence of an object, and further, knowing it as the reference of a certain name. Even if a speaker does not learn the name ostensively, but instead as a link on a chain that originates in ostension, the perceptual grounds of the original act of naming together with a reference-preserving causal chain extending back to the perceptual identification generally support knowledge of existence and reference.

8. Allowing that rigidification can sometimes suffice for a DN to be singular, in the manner above, we have the possibility of singular reference and thought. But let us now revisit the question of whether rigidification of a pure definite description, with the singular referential intentions and truth-conditions that accompany it, do indeed suffice for genuine singular reference and thought. I entertained this possibility above based on the utility of Kaplan's *dthat* operator, which is the basic strategy of all those seeking to defend of the singular status of a DN (Jeshion being the most developed). But this maneuver leaves ignorance of existence and uniqueness, relying merely on the presumption of an as yet unknown unique satisfier. And this is why I questioned the possibility of knowing a singular thought formed in this way. But if we now allow further that there could be cases of a pure definite description where existence and uniqueness are known, then rigidification would seem to open the possibility of singular knowledge too.

The result of rigidification is to transform truth-conditions from general to singular, thus requiring a unique satisfier in the role of referent, in line with the referential intentions which the subject seeks to impose on the general thought. As I have stressed, however, this seems to be as far as the pure descriptive stipulation can take us. Ignorant of existence and uniqueness, we cannot yet know the singular thoughts we can entertain. However, I think we could countenance the possibility of possessing knowledge of existence and uniqueness in the case of a DN, insofar as it is possible to possess knowledge of existence and uniqueness for a pure definite description. For then we can transfer that status to a DN we coin on its basis, and which we regard as rigid. For example, prior to the 2016 U.S. Presidential election I think,

(0) The next POTUS will face a divided electorate.

¹⁰⁸ That Leverrier's understanding of "Neptune" turned out to be genuine, while "Vulcan" was revealed to have given only the illusion of understanding, reinforces the distinction.

Let us suppose further that we can know that such an individual uniquely exists. We do not, and perhaps cannot, know who such an individual is. Still we can suppose we also know that the unique satisfier is either Clinton or Trump. And in rigidifying the description we use it with referential intentions, thus outfitting it with singular truth-conditions as opposed to the quantificational truth-conditions it has on Russellian readings. Do we now have all we need to know singular reference and thought here?

Consider the grounds for the predication in such a case. The first thing to notice is that the judgment I express by a given use of (0) is unmediated. The predication does not depend on any identification of an individual as the unique satisfier. My judgment depends only on the general notions of someone being the next president and that of facing a divided electorate, such that whoever uniquely satisfies the first also satisfies the second. This does not change as a result of rigidification. Taking up the judgment with singular intentions changes its truth-conditions, but does not add anything to the grounds of the judgments. For despite being unmediated, the grounds for the judgment are purely general. Its subject matter is a relation between two properties, such that whatever uniquely satisfies the first also satisfies the second. Although unmediated predications are a mark of singular reference and thought, it is not unique to them.¹⁰⁹ That it is unmediated does not make it singular. But as we have seen, rigidification makes it singular in at least this sense: the sentence becomes true iff the actual unique satisfier also satisfies the predicate; false iff he/she does not; and empty if there is none.

Even rigidified, it still seems to be the same general thought, because its subject matter centrally concerns a relation between the two properties, and that remains the basis for the unmediated predication. How could this become a singular thought when the predication derives, as it does, from the DD? The judgment I express in an utterance of (0) is indifferent to the identity of a unique satisfier for the DD in position of grammatical subject. Whoever happens to satisfy it does not change the purely general grounds for the thought. In making it, I am moved only by the general notion of someone being the next president, and that of facing a divided electorate, such that whoever fits the first will thereby satisfy the second. Considerations of who this might be do not matter. The judgment is driven by a relation between two general properties, irrespective of the identity of who might happen to satisfy them. These general grounds are untouched when I take up this judgment with singular intentions, rigidifying the description, and requiring unique satisfaction for what is now treated as its singular truth-conditions. I might know that it is either Clinton and Trump. And I might also believe it to be one or the other. But this stays incidental to the rational basis of the judgment. Even when regarded with singular referential intentions, all that matters is the presumption of a unique satisfier,

¹⁰⁹ Indeed, in this context any converse predication of Clinton or Trump would itself be mediated by my identification one or the other as the next POTUS, combined with the prior judgment (1), in arriving at the judgment that Trump or Clinton will face a divided electorate. This would be a case of a singular thought mediated by a general thought.

rather than the identification of one. In the general case, even that does not matter. Rigidified or not, the basis for predication remains the general content captured by the definite description. Treating it with singular intentions does not change this fact.

9. Now if we continue to suppose that rigidification confers singular reference and thought here, we have to ask in what sense it is thereby 'about' a particular individual—whoever actually uniquely satisfies the DD. And second, we must consider whether this thought is knowable, given the added inclusion of knowledge unique existence.

Does this suffice for singular thought? Here are three reasons to suppose it might not. The attempted singular thought remains indifferent to the identity of the unique satisfier, as the predication is undertaken irrespective of whoever happens to satisfy the DD. Whether I think that will be Clinton, Trump, or anyone does not change this. Anyone who uniquely satisfies will suffice, purely by virtue of their being the individual uniquely satisfying it. I might know that it is either Trump or Clinton. I might also believe it will be one or the other. But this would remain irrelevant in any case. When we are only considering the original general thought, then, there is no reason whatsoever to suppose that my thought is 'about' whoever this happens to be, rather than the purely general thought to the effect that whoever is the next president will face a divided electorate. Does rigidification transform this into a singular thought about whoever that actually is?

That the grounds for the predication remain whether one adds singular intentions to it or not is underpinned by the fact that the predication is not based on any information I receive from an individual. Whether it turns out to be Trump, Clinton, or whoever, to the extent that my thought is about one at all, the source is not that individual, or even testimony based on information from that individual. The basis for the thought is not tied to information from any individual but from general considerations alone. As rigidification does not change this fact, it must somehow make that thought 'about' its unique satisfier, despite the rational basis for the thought remaining general and indifferent to the identity of whoever happens to be its actual unique satisfier, and furthermore removed from any information coming from that individual.

Despite all this can we still say that the thought is about its unique satisfier, so that whoever it turns out to be is who was thought about all along? If it is Clinton, then it is she whom I thought about in thinking about whoever is the actual next president. Likewise if it turns out to be Trump or anyone else. Whoever it happens to be, all that matters is that I thought about that individual all along, on the basis of rigidification. If we maintain this, we do so in the face of the fact that the grounds remain purely general, indifferent to the identity of a potential unique satisfier, and untouched by any information coming from such an individual.

Further, given that the predication is driven entirely by what the subject supposes to follow from the general content of the DD alone, we should consider whether there are permissible predications with a pure DD in subject position that are driven by anything else. It seems to me to be eminently questionable whether there are. In dealing with a pure DD, we are dealing with a general notion combined with a predicate in essaying a general thought to the effect that whoever or whatever uniquely satisfies the DD also satisfies the predicate. As such, it is indifferent to the particular form of existence and identity of any such individual. Consequently the grounds for whatever predicate we combine with a DD in position of grammatical subject will not derive from information from any particular individual, but from what the subject supposes follows from unique satisfaction of the general property encapsulated by the DD. The justification for whatever predicate we combine with the DD then depends on what issues from its general notion, and not information derived from any potential satisfier. Ignorant as we all are over who the next president will be, the only predicates we can justifiably combine with the DD are those that issue from its general content.

Suppose I harbor the belief that the next president is Clinton, and go on to use information I derive from Clinton in making claims with the DD in subject position. "The next POTUS is a woman," I say. I here predicate "__is a woman" of the denotation of "the next POTUS" based not on the DD alone, but on the identification of Clinton as its actual denotation. Now suppose this turns out to be false because Trump wins. Under the assumption of rigidification, this thought was about whoever is the actual denotation. In the event that it is Trump, then the thought I entertain by the combination of predicate and rigidified DD is a singular thought about Trump to the effect that he is a woman. This is plainly not the singular thought I intended. The trouble arises because I base my predication not solely on the content of the DD, but on my belief about its denotation. It is thus not an unmediated judgment deriving from the content of the DD alone, but one mediated by a supposed identification between its denotation and Clinton.

We might view this as an unintended consequence of rigidification. As we are dealing with a pure DD when we rigidify, the range of permissible predications are circumscribed by the range of its general content. Rigidification requires this regimentation, as it is hard to see how we could justifiably go outside of it when our intended target is whoever is its denotation. Not knowing who that is, what we say 'about' him or her, in concatenations with the DD, is constrained by what we can glean from the DD alone. Adding information from individuals threatens to undercut the very point of the rigidification, to the extent that it introduces information that we are not yet entitled to attribute to an individual we know only as whoever is actually the denotation. If we do so anyway, we risk saddling ourselves with a thought about Trump being a woman.

The point is this: perhaps rigidification does permit singular thought about whoever happens to be the denotation. As it is our overriding intention to target just such an individual, the range of permissible predications remains limited to what can be

extrapolated from the DD alone. Predications issuing from other sources threatens to undo the very aim of the rigidification—targeting an object only insofar as it is the actual denotation—by exceeding the epistemic constraints imposed by the permissible range of the DD. If the procedure of rigidifying a pure DD really can reach a referent, then maintaining fidelity to it requires that we limit the permissible range of predications to what falls within the reach of its general content. Otherwise, while we may still secure a singular thought, it could very well not be one licensed by the DD, consequently undercutting the express aim of the rigidification to target only what is attributable to an object in virtue of being the denotation. The upshot is that we can suppose that rigidification suffices for singular reference and thought, and suppose further that we can sometimes also know that there is a unique denotation for it (whoever or whatever that might be), and still our use of the DN is drastically circumscribed by the range of permissible predicates determined by the domain of the DD. This marks a clear contrast between a DN and a PN, even when the DN enjoys an unusually elevated epistemic standing in not only having a denotation, but in this fact also being known by a speaker of it. This is a privileged position for a DN, given the epistemic uncertainty of its origins—targeting an object solely on the basis of what fits a conception, not knowing whether such an object exists at all.

This is all guided by the assumption that there is singular thought here, such that I do in fact think of Trump being a woman above. But does it put pressure on that too? Well, if predication is limited by the DD, then it does not depend on information from any object—apart from the risk it runs when it draws on such outside sources of undermining the purpose of rigidification to target an object only insofar as it is its denotation. So the range of permissible thoughts will be circumscribed by a general conception of an individual of certain sort, rather than by information coming from any such an individual. This is necessary for maintaining good epistemic practice in line with the point of rigidification. We confine predication to the conception rather than information coming from any particular individual, as we must to set our sights only what is the denotation—a commitment we undertake when we want to achieve singular reference through rigidification. But if a DN can get this far and still be so severely limited, this is another reason to segregate it from the class of ordinary proper names.

But when we confine our judgments to this range, can we still be said to be thinking about the denotation, given that the properties we are entitled to predicate derive from the general conception and not information from an individual? We don't direct our thoughts on the basis of information coming from an individual; rather, the situation is in reverse: we target whoever happens to uniquely satisfy a general conception, available independently of the contingency of its satisfaction. As the source of justifiable predications is a general conception whose content is essentially independent of an object satisfying it, what makes these thoughts 'about' the denotation? In just the general case, this is not at issue. The question is how rigidification can take us from the general to the singular, given that the permissible

range of predications do not essentially derive from the denotation, and so is not essentially or directly related to it.

As the basis of predication is what pertains to the pure DD as such, and not necessarily any information from a potential denotation, it is 'about' its denotation, if at all, essentially indirectly, by at least one degree of separation: the thought or utterance is about the denotation only insofar as it satisfies the DD; accordingly, its permissible predications don't derive from the object but only from those aspects of a general conception of an object contained in the DD. So neither what we think about, nor what it is we so think about it, derive from the object itself. As the predications do not issue from information derived from denotation, when it is true of it, it is by virtue of a happy alignment between what accrues to the content of the DD and the coincidence of its denotation possessing them too.

This too marks another deep disparity between DNs and PNs. If predication is confined to what is supposed to pertain to the general notion—an epistemic policy necessary for fulfilling the purpose of rigidification—then it does not come from the object. And so when it happens to be true of the object, it is by virtue of a happy coincidence between what the subject supposes would be true of whoever happens to fit the conception and the individual. It is coincidental insofar as it is not derived from info particular to the individual but part and parcel of a general conception applicable to many others. It happens to be true of the individual as it is supposed to flow from a general conception he happens to satisfy.

In summation, even in the best case scenario where we achieve singular reference through rigidification of a pure DD, of which we know further has a unique existent, we are still handicapped by its epistemic constraints. Insofar as there is singular thought, its range of predication is severely limited by the DD. We are forced to work within this range, on pain of predicating extraneous information, leading to singular thoughts (if such they are) about Trump being a woman. It is a result of rigidification that fidelity to the only object (if any) it could target requires us to keep our predications in line with the content of the descriptive stipulation and what can be reasonably extrapolated from it, rather than from information derived from an object. Not knowing one, as such is our situation, we risk losing the only relevant referent provided by the rigidification. One upshot is that a DN enjoying an unusually high epistemic standing is nonetheless quite narrow in its range of acceptable use, which clearly distinguishes it from a PN.

So the range of application is quite limited by the pursuit of genuine singular reference, even if it happens to enjoy it. But it is questionable whether it does, given that the information we connect to it does not derive from the object itself, but from a general conception essentially available independently of it and involving information applicable to others as well. When true, it is by a happy coincidence, as there is no reason to suppose that everything a speaker in possession of a pure DD takes to be true of its denotation—purely by virtue of being its denotation—will in fact fit the actual denotation. By contrast, predications based on info from the object

are much more reliable. So it is questionable whether we can know such singular thoughts, if they achieve that status at all. In even the best cases, the rational basis of predication remains general, not tied to the object as its source, and only reaches it by confining its predication to the general conception. When true, it is by accident, calling the status of knowledge into question. In the face of all of that, it is unclear whether a procedure of rigidification is really adequate for singular reference and thought, and knowledge of it. Even if both are at least in principle attainable in the best of circumstances, its application is still severely limited.

10. From the outset, then, the fundamental difference is that between a known and unknown object. The very *raison d'être* of a DN bears witness to this. There is some interest in finding an object that fits a certain conception, but it is not known what fits it (if anything). By contrast, in ordinary processes of proper name formation, we do not begin with an idea of an object and then introduce a name for whatever happens to uniquely fit it. Rather, a known object comes to occupy our interest and we introduce a name to keep track of it.

Of course an ordinary proper name attempt might fail, and a descriptive fixation might succeed. Obviously we are not infallible in ordinary naming. But the possibility of error does not threaten the fact that we reliably get things right, and do so because we are dealing with a known object to be named, rather than the idea of an object in which we have some interest and reason to suppose exists, but which is otherwise unknown and perhaps unknowable. We can take a failed attempt of ordinary naming in our stride, then, as the overwhelming rate of success seems to suggest it is an exception to the rule. And so the risk of error need not force a piecemeal policy of assessing each one case by case. We can maintain the difference, as we allow at least for the possibility of exceptions. This does not require skeptical standards of knowledge. Rather, it is based on the difference between naming a known object and an unknown object. The fact that the first is fallible does not change the fact that it is generally reliable, in contrast with the other. Outside of philosophy, the vanishingly few examples ("Neptune," "Vulcan," "Jack") do not inspire confidence, as it is a mixed record with only the first having a known reference.

Ordinary assignment need not be conditional—again, not because it is infallible—but because it routinely begins with a known object. It is generally known because of the reliability of its means of identification—regular perceptual contact and recognition among a group of speakers, in the case of personal proper names and other animate objects. By contrast, the few cases of DNs we know begin, by design, in a state of ignorance, and rely on a procedure whose reliability in yielding knowable objects is questionable, considering the limited rate of success in the available cases. Given the epistemic uncertainty in the few actual examples, it seems reasonable to treat the descriptive assignment of reference as provisional. It is not that there are not or could not be cases that begin on a surer footing, it is just that almost all the ones we have are not

Further, as I have stressed, the reference of an ordinary proper name does not stand or fall according to its unique satisfaction of a definite description. Once its reference is fixed by producer's knowledge, any number of informational links anchor its reference. The situation is evidently more precarious with DNs.¹¹⁰ What's more, the reference of a proper name is supported by information derived directly from encounters with that object as well as being transmitted in communication based on such encounters. With DNs, there is no direct encounters with an object at all or testimony based on it.

11. The Kripkean Contingent A Priori

With these points in mind, let us turn now to the problem of the Kripkean contingent *a priori*, as it arises for descriptive names. How is it possible to gain contingent knowledge of the world *a priori*? Necessary truths, being true in every possible world, might be known *a priori* in virtue of their non-empirical character. But contingent truths, being true in some possible worlds or none, would seem only to be knowable *a posteriori* precisely in virtue of their empirical character. We can know that $6+7=13$ without recourse to how things might stand in a certain segment of empirical reality, actual or possible. But we can't know that Neptune has 13 moons "without looking" (in Kripke's phrase). So it may seem in general that knowing whether a contingent claim obtains or not cannot be anything but an *a posteriori* affair. Having separated the modal notions of necessity and contingency from the epistemic notions of the *a priori* and *a posteriori*, however, Kripke opens up the potential for a contingent statement knowable *a priori*.¹¹¹ The alleged instances he deals with are all generated by descriptive reference-fixing of terms. He writes:

An even better case of determining the reference of a name by description, as opposed to ostension, is the discovery of the planet Neptune. Neptune was hypothesized as the planet which caused such and such discrepancies in the orbits of certain other planets. If Leverrier indeed gave the name 'Neptune' to the planet before it was ever seen, then he fixed the reference of 'Neptune' by means of the descriptions just mentioned. At that time he was unable to see the planet even through a telescope. At this stage, an *a priori* material equivalence held between the statements 'Neptune exists' and 'some one planet perturbing the orbit of such and such other planets exists in such and such a position', and also such statements as 'if such and such perturbations are caused by a planet, they are caused by Neptune' had the status of *a priori* truths. Nevertheless, they were not necessary truths, since 'Neptune' was introduced as a name rigidly designating a certain planet. Leverrier could well have believed that if Neptune had been knocked off its course one million

¹¹⁰ Even names for abstract objects are known according to their place in a canonical system of ordering, or by determinate mathematical properties, rather than descriptive stipulation. See Burge (2012).

¹¹¹ Ditto for the necessary *a posteriori*, though it has not seemed to stir up as much confusion and controversy.

years earlier, it would have caused no such perturbations and even that some other object might have caused the perturbations in its place.¹¹²

What is supposed be knowable *a priori*, in the first instance, is a biconditional statement consisting of an existential statement formed from the stipulated name, on one side, and another formed from the stipulating description, on the other. As Kripke also allows, either of the conditionals out of which it is compounded might be known *a priori*. Schematically, the primary options are as follows: “a exists if and only if the F exists”; “If a exists, then the F exists”; and “If the F exists, the a exists.”¹¹³ Such a statement is nonetheless contingent insofar as it’s not necessary that the referent of “a” be the F. Substituting “Neptune” for “a,” this could take the form of the following family:

- (1) Neptune exists if and only if the planet perturbing the orbit of Uranus exists.
- (1a) If Neptune exists, the planet perturbing the orbit of Uranus exists.
- (1b) If the planet perturbing the orbit of Uranus exists, Neptune exists.

Take (1). As Kripke indicates, that Neptune is the cause of certain orbital perturbations certainly seems contingent. And without knowing whether such a planet exists at all, the stipulation that the referent of “Neptune” is nothing if not the denotation of “the planet perturbing the orbit of Uranus” appears to afford *a priori* knowledge of the conditional and biconditional statements above. In order to possess the knowledge expressed by (1) *a priori*, someone like Leverrier, who knows that the thing named by “Neptune” (if anything) is fixed by fiat, would not have to look at the empirical world and discover whether it in fact contains some such planet. This courts the following questions. If knowledge of (1) is strictly separate from the knowledge that such a planet exists, is it knowledge of *Neptune* at all? In knowing (1), we do not yet know whether the world uniquely contains a particular planet with those defining features. Hence we do not yet know whether Neptune exists or not. Can there be knowledge of Neptune without knowledge of the existence of Neptune? Can one know Neptune without knowing that Neptune exists?

I shall argue that if (1) expresses a truth about *Neptune* at all, it is not knowable on any grounds—*a priori* or *a posteriori*—until one knows the existence of Neptune. By parity, if (1) itself strictly makes no claims about Neptune, that opens up the possibility of knowing it in the face of ignorance of existence. What is known in that case may very well be both contingent and *a priori*.

12. To clarify the question of knowledge of Neptune, it might prove helpful to recall Russell’s familiar distinction between “knowledge of things” and “knowledge of truths.” In the first sense, one can know Neptune insofar as one is “acquainted” with

¹¹² Kripke (op. cit.: 79n.)

¹¹³ It’s not immediately obvious that the other sort of statement Kripke adds—‘If such and such perturbations are caused by a planet, they are caused by Neptune’—are of a piece with the others. More on this below.

it. Allowing for looser restrictions than Russell himself imposed on it, acquaintance (for present purposes) roughly comes to perceptually identifying the object of thought rather than inferring it on the basis of separate propositions. In the second sense, one knows Neptune on the basis of uniquely identifying propositional knowledge. Although Russell supposed the latter to rest ultimately on the former, a subject's possession of an individuating conception of an object, absent her own acquaintance with it, can nevertheless suffice. Either way, the point is that knowledge of Neptune (or whatever) is not separate from knowledge of its existence. If knowledge is gained through acquaintance, there must be some object of acquaintance. Failing that, there is nothing to know. The same goes for knowledge by description. If no object is thus described, nothing presents itself as an object of knowledge. But when something is known in these ways, the knowledge of that object is inextricably tied to the knowledge of that object's existence. If the appearance of an object turns out to be a mirage, or otherwise mistaken, there was never anything to be known in the first place. Knowledge of Neptune, then, is inseparable from knowledge of the existence of Neptune—whatever its rational basis might be.

Ignorant of the existence of Neptune, we are strictly ignorant of Neptune *simpliciter*. In this state, we are not presently afforded the opportunity of knowing a truth about Neptune in advance of knowing its existence. As there is no knowledge of Neptune prior to knowledge of its existence, *a fortiori* there is no knowledge of Neptune to the effect that it is F. From this perspective, let us return to (1) and suppose, *ex hypothesi*, that it is knowable *a priori*. Now what might we know when we know the truth of (1)? Proceeding by subtraction, we can exclude knowing either side of the biconditional right off the bat:

- (2) The planet perturbing the orbit of Uranus exists.
- (3) Neptune exists.

To know (2) is to know that there is one and only one planet perturbing the orbit of Uranus. Acquiring that knowledge requires empirical investigation. It is clearly only knowable *a posteriori*, and so cannot count as a candidate for a contingent *a priori* truth. By the same token, it is only through engagements with empirical reality that one can arrive at knowledge of (3). Bringing these three together: in knowing that Neptune exists iff the planet perturbing the orbit of Uranus exists, we neither know that Neptune exists nor that the planet perturbing the orbit of Uranus exists.

Still, pointing to (4), one might protest that knowledge of (1) underwrites knowledge of it:

- (4) Neptune is the planet perturbing the orbit of Uranus.

It is instructive here to recall some basic points. Knowledge of (4), of course, implies its truth. As a rule, one cannot know that p unless p. Given that "A knows that p" entails p, "A knows that p, but not-p" is incoherent. Regarding (4) specifically, it is

true if and only if the referent of “Neptune” satisfies the property expressed by the description. Without a doubt, (4) is apt to express a truth about Neptune, provided it expresses anything truth-evaluable at all. To know this truth, moreover, implies knowing something about Neptune. Absent knowledge of Neptune itself, however, such knowledge as expressed by (4) is presently out of reach. This epistemic point, I hasten again to add, need not rule out the possibility of descriptive reference-fixing altogether, or of entertaining the singular thoughts expressed by the names they give rise to, as in (4). Equipped with enough information, one can fashion a conception of an object that might or might not happen to exist, and affix a name to it provisionally. In the event that something happens to satisfy the stipulation, we can come to possess knowledge of it—but *only* then. For we don’t know anything about Neptune at all until we know that it exists. In this case we don’t yet know that Neptune is the planet perturbing the orbit of Uranus. Pending that, knowledge of (1) neither presupposes, expresses, nor implies knowledge of (2), (3), or (4).

One clue that (1) might not be in the business of making any claim about Neptune at all is that it is compatible with (5), though no statement of the form “Neptune is F” is.

(5) Neptune does not exist.

If (5) is true, (1) remains true. We do know in advance that the name and the description stand to one and the same object (if any). Consequently, we also know that the biconditional is guaranteed to be true, on the grounds that both sides must have the same truth-value. If (5) obtains, each side is false; if (5) fails to obtain, each side is true. Either way, the biconditional is true. By contrast, take any sentence “Neptune is F,” e.g.:

(6) Neptune has an orbital period of 165 years.

Any such statement is incompatible with (5), which, if true, would reveal (6) to be lacking truth-conditional content altogether. If the truth of a statement is wholly indifferent to the existence of bearers for each of the terms that compose it, as (1) is, perhaps the point of the statement lies elsewhere.¹¹⁴

13. To home in on its import, let us consider the significance of statements of existence. My approach to existential sentences follows in the tradition of Kant, Frege, Russell, and what seems to be a dominant view in contemporary linguistics of treating them as second-order properties, rather than first-order properties of objects.¹¹⁵ The subject matter of a sentence like “Ghosts exist” is a relation between

¹¹⁴ Clearly these remarks do not constitute a solution to the problem of the contingent *a priori*. Rather, their import is to elicit the trivial flavor surrounding a solution. For an elegant solution, see Evans (1979). Davies & Humberstone (1980) and Davies (2004) provide insightful formalizations and developments of Evans’ framework.

¹¹⁵ Wiggins (1995), McNally (2012)

a first and a second-order property, viz. that the property of being a ghost is instantiated. Conversely, “Ghosts do not exist” says that the property of being ghost is uninstantiated. If the semantics of “exists” and its analogues is to have a uniform treatment—one that does not shift depending on whether a general term like “ghosts” or a singular term like “Neptune” occupies the position of grammatical subject¹¹⁶—then “Neptune exists” expresses the instantiation of the property of being Neptune. However we are to make sense of this, what matters for now is that such a statement does not involve any singular predication. The subject matter is not the object Neptune but the property Neptune, to the effect that it is instantiated. Now although this statement does not mention an object, it is true in virtue of some first-order statement that does specify the object whose instantiation renders its corresponding second-order statement of existence true. But the specific semantic form of such a first-order predication is all downstream for the moment. The relevant point now is that existential sentences do not themselves express claims about objects, and, in not being essentially object-involving, can be understood whether an object instantiates it or not.

So the first part of the biconditional (1) concerns the instantiation of the property Neptune, understood whether it is in fact instantiated or not. The second part of (1) is also a statement of existence, concerning the descriptive property of being a unique planet perturbing the orbit of Uranus. We can understand both accordingly as second-order statements indifferent as such to an object. As we recognize that the right-hand side includes the reference-fixing condition for the referent of “Neptune,” we have all we need to understand its import. From it we learn that the conditions for instantiation of the property on the left is coextensive with the conditions for instantiation of the descriptive property on the right. The second-order reading thus chimes completely with its contingent a priori status.

We cannot let matters rest here, however, until we achieve a working understanding of the property pertaining to a singular term. I find a satisfying answer in Wiggins.¹¹⁷ According to him, the individual property pertaining to a proper name like “Vulcan” is captured by the predicate “_ = Vulcan.” This is the property of being identical to Vulcan. But if “Vulcan” qua empty singular term cannot itself strictly be understood, how can the content of its corresponding property? In this regard, Wiggins adverts to the kind of pretense account of names in fiction and hypothesis found in Walton, Kripke, and especially Evans.¹¹⁸ The basic idea is that in such circumstances we introduce a proper name within the scope of a pretense or supposition. This allows us to assemble an apparatus of reference, with would-be informational associations with the name enabling us to build up a conception of an object. This furnishes as much understanding as can be had for the intelligible use of the name within scope of its pretense. By adverting to such a conception we seek to supply sufficient sense to the property of the object on its basis. Not knowing

¹¹⁶ A consideration adduced by Wiggins in his (1995).

¹¹⁷ Wiggins (2003)

¹¹⁸ Walton (1978), Evans (1982: Ch.11), Kripke (2013)

whether “_ = Vulcan” is instantiated, we form a conception of an object, such that the only thing that could instantiate the individual property is that object (if any) that our conception is answerable to. Coming to terms with “Vulcan does not exist” then does not demand that we find a singular content where there is none. Rather, all it requires is the second-order recognition that there is no such object instantiating the individual property of Vulcan.

REPORTS OF NOMINAL THOUGHT & TALK

He doesn't have the same spring in his step that he used to. That's been Freddie Roach's assertion for quite some time, and he isn't backing off his beliefs.

Will Esco¹¹⁹

*Do not call it hypothesis, even less theory,
but the manner of presenting to the mind.*

Georg Lichtenberg¹²⁰

1. Introduction

The goal of this chapter is to propose a modified Fregean approach to ascriptions of singular thought and talk, continuing the focus throughout on proper names. The modification comes in the form of an intervention from Davidson's paratactic proposal.¹²¹ One virtue of this approach is that it maintains the principle of 'semantic innocence' according to which reference does not shift between embedded and unembedded contexts. Another is its refusal to posit an intermediary abstract entity standing between subjects and the subject matter of their thought and talk. Barwise and Perry¹²², however, deny that both principles, as they conceive them, are compatible with a Fregean notion of sense. This might not seem to pose a problem except for the fact that, for all the virtues of parataxis, the account stands incomplete in the uncertainty of its conditions for the content of a reporter's utterance to stand in a suitable relation of 'samesaying' to the content of the speaker's utterance. A major claim is that we can use the notion of de re sense on offer to serve this purpose, without falling afoul of the fundamental rationale for Barwise & Perry's joint principles.

What follows falls into four parts. I first defend Davidson's paratactic proposal, with the aim of preserving these virtues of it. I then apply the austere notion of de re sense to it, in accordance with Davidson's concomitant claim that there are no abstract intermediaries involved. Toward this end, I formulate a notion of states of affairs and truth-conditions, according to which distinct singular senses mark rational differences in the relevant patterns of thought and talk. I then turn to Frege's puzzle, emphasizing that what is special about its inferential structure generates the same entailments that the logical form of parataxis would predict. I conclude by showing how the operative principles for individuating the sense of a proper name enables resolution of Kripke's puzzle.

2. The Paratactic Proposal

¹¹⁹ Esco (2015)

¹²⁰ Drury (1973: 29)

¹²¹ Davidson, (1984)

¹²² Barwise & Perry (1983)

Davidson designed his well-known paratactic analysis of *oratio obliqua* contexts with an eye to avoiding the pitfalls that devil the quotational approaches of his sententialist predecessors and the problems posed by propositionalist accounts. What drives his opposition to the latter is not only his Quinean mistrust of postulating intensional entities generally, but specifically the counterintuitiveness he finds in Frege's contention that the words composing the embedded complement clause refer to their senses rather than their ordinary references. In his familiar example, an utterance of "Galileo said that the earth moves" becomes a sequence of two sentences: The earth moves. Galileo said that. The parataxis treats "that" as demonstratively referring to the sentential utterance that precedes it, and "Galileo said that" is true iff the reporter's utterance places her in a relation of "samesaying" to Galileo's original utterance.

The upshot is twofold. Davidson writes, "What follows gives the content of the subject's saying, but has no logical or semantic connection with the original attribution of a saying" (106). Further: "The appearance of failure of the laws of extensional substitution is explained as due to our mistaking what are really two sentences for one: we make substitutions in one sentence, but it is the other (the utterance of) which changes in truth" (107). To illustrate these points, consider their application to a case of Frege's puzzle. Hannah endorses an utterance of (1) while simultaneously rejecting an utterance of (2). The force of her saying "Hesperus is visible" appears to warrant reporting her speech as in (3). But the truth of the identity-statement (4) would also appear to license the substitution found in (5).

- (1) Hesperus is visible.
- (2) Phosphorus is visible.
- (3) Hannah said that Hesperus is visible.
- (4) Hesperus is Phosphorus.
- (5) Hannah said that Phosphorus is visible.

By giving the logical form of (3) in terms of (6), Davidson's paratactic treatment allows us to block the inference from (3) and (4) to (5):

- (6) Hesperus is visible. Hannah said that.

The upshot is to sever the inferential link between the original utterance and the report of it in (3). For the truth of "Hannah said that" depends only on the relation of samesaying obtaining between the utterance of the sentence it demonstrates—(1)—and what Hannah uttered. As there is thus no inference to (4), there is no counterpart to it entailed by (6):

- (7) Phosphorus is visible. Hannah said that.

3. *Objections and Replies.* Higginbotham (1987) and Segal (1989) maintain that anaphorically ambiguous speech reports resist a paratactic treatment. The problem

for them is that (8) is ambiguous between (9) and (10), and the parataxis issuing in (11), to Segal's ear, would only cover (9). The relation of samesaying in (10) would hold between the reporter's utterance of the content-sentence "They love Lucy" and each individual's utterance "I love Lucy." And in (9) samesaying would hold between the reporter's utterance of "They love Lucy" and each individual's utterance of "They love Lucy." Analyzing (8) in terms of (11), then, will fail to handle cases where the reporter's intention is to capture the significance glossed by (10).

(8) Everybody said that they love Lucy.

(9) Everybody said of some group that they love Lucy.

(10) Everybody said of themselves that they love Lucy.

(11) Everybody said that. They love Lucy.

Now to my ear, unlike Segal's, (11) inherits all of the ambiguity latent in (8). Equally ambiguous between (9) and (10), utterances of both (8) and (11) stand in need of disambiguating the same elements. Determinate truth-conditions for utterances of (8) and (11) alike hinge on contextual completion in one way or the other. This is just something that ordinary speakers need to sort out in the rough-and-tumble of everyday discourse. But why should that quotidian ambiguity pose a special problem for a paratactic treatment, or, for that matter, any rival analysis of logical form? Suppose, e.g., that (8) is subjected to a standard Millian treatment. That would involve a statement relating a certain group of agents (whatever is the relevant domain of "everybody") to a certain set-theoretical construction (the ordered-triple containing the love-relation and the objects denoted by "they" and "Lucy"). Clearly, such an analysis cannot be carried out without first settling the question of quantifier binding at issue in (8). Nevertheless, for (11) to qualify as an acceptable parataxis of (8), utterances of it would need to be understood on some interpretation. Whether that is achieved by extrapolating material contained in (9) or (10), it remains an open question to what extent that might interfere with a paratactic approach in general or the parsing given by (11) in particular.

Viewed as self-standing sentence-tokens, the indexicals in "I love Lucy" and "They love Lucy" preclude those sentences as such from bearing determinate truth-conditions. But relative to an occasion of utterance, each indexical will be assigned distinct denotations. In such circumstances, utterances of these sentences are apt to bear determinate, truth-conditional content. Similarly, resolving the ambiguity between the binding and non-binding occurrences of the quantifier in (8) requires contextual disambiguation for it to possess determinate truth-conditions. In one of the two potential scenarios giving rise to (8), multiple speakers produce utterances of "I love Lucy" applicable at once to each of them. If communication were successful here, an audience would understand each speaker as saying of himself or herself that he/she loves Lucy. In the other, a group of speakers intend their utterances of "They love Lucy" to apply to some other group. Here too successful communication would depend on recognition of that. In either case, the original speakers know what they mean by their utterances, as will any audience who understands them.

If a comprehending audience wishes to report what was said by one such utterance, she will do so with one intended meaning or the other and produce her utterance of (8) accordingly. But if the reporter understands the original utterances, she will already know which reading of (8) is called for. Absent that, she is unequipped to intend her utterance of (8) to capture what the original speakers meant by their utterances. Once the reporter apprehends the relevant contextual parameters of the original utterances, their intended interpretation should be transparent to her. From there, she will intend her report to express the import of one of the original utterances. Depending on the circumstances, she will regard her utterance of (8) in terms roughly given by either (9) or (10). With the reporter's understanding of (8) in place, the content-sentence of (11) will thereby be secured an interpretation. It will be the same as the interpretation she put forward in uttering (8).

Inasmuch as her production of (8) serves this purpose, (11) does equally well. Both (8) and (11) demand the same degree of contextual disambiguation. Just as understanding utterances of (8) necessitate an appeal to one of the types of contextual features roughly marked out by (9) or (10), so does understanding (11) necessitates an appeal to those found in (12) or (13). An appropriate contextual completion of (11) will then draw on some instances roughly like the following:

(12) Speaking of the Lucille Ball fan club, everybody said that. They love Lucy.

(13) Speaking of themselves, everybody said that. They love Lucy.

This appears to preserve the point of the paratactic parsing. Utterance of (12) would make the reporter a samesayer with those speakers who, in uttering, "They love Lucy," say that some other group loves Lucy. And utterance of (13) would make her a samesayer with the relevant group of speakers who utter, "I love Lucy." Does this force us to abandon the original parataxis (11)? No. The point of appealing to the elements contained in (9) and (10), in making sense of (8), is not to put them forward as candidate analyses of (8). Nor is either gloss meant to replace (8), as if it were defective. Rather, they underline how understanding an utterance of (8) depends on recognition of certain contextual features. In this way, they function as expository devices encapsulating the material needed for an utterance of (8) to express a determinate content. Their utility consists in reminding us what understanding an utterance of (8) would involve. By parallel, we might regard (12) and (6) serving as similar reminders of the contextual features that figure in understanding an utterance of (11), rather than surrogates for it.

In brief, while the sentence-type (8) is ambiguous as it stands, a reporter who utters it with understanding does so with a determinable interpretation in mind. This interpretation will already be available in virtue of her understanding the speakers' utterances in the first place. If an utterance of (8) is thus intelligible, so is its parataxis.

4. *Does parataxis protect valid inferences?* Several authors have argued that a certain valid pattern of inference is rendered invalid by Davidson's paratactic treatment.¹²³ In McKay & Nelson's example,

(14) Lois said that Superman is strong

entails itself. That is,

(15) Lois said that Superman is strong

Lois said that Superman is strong

is a valid argument. On a paratactic parsing, however, the logical form of (8) is given by

(16) Lois said that. Superman is strong.

The charge, however, is that

(17) Lois said that. Superman is strong.

Lois said that. Superman is strong.

is not a valid argument. In (16), the demonstrative refers to the reporter's utterance of the subsequent sentence. In virtue of its form, then, the semantic components of the content-sentence are not part of semantics the sentence preceding it. Because the reference of "that" is fixed by the utterance of the sentence that follows it, the truth of "Lois said that" is bound by that particular utterance. Even another utterance of the same sentence would change the truth of the report. While this regimentation promises to prevent familiar substitution failures, it comes at an undesirable cost that threatens to undermine the whole enterprise. There is no safeguard, it seems, coming from logical or semantic form and ensuring that the utterance referred to in (14) is the same utterance in (16).

Such misgivings have prompted some to abandon Davidson's deployment of utterances in favor of an appeal to "utterance-types,"¹²⁴ and others to deny the validity of (15) to begin with.¹²⁵ My aim here is to suggest that such maneuvers are unnecessary, for the repetition of the demonstrative in the conclusion of (17) need not result from a separate utterance.

5. Utterances, *qua* events, are concrete particulars.¹²⁶ If the two occurrences of "that" in the premise and conclusion of (17) refer to different utterances—even of

¹²³ See Platts (1979), Schiffer (1987: 135-7), Lepore & Loewer (1989), Seymour (1994), McKay & Nelson (2014).

¹²⁴ Rumfitt (1989)

¹²⁵ Lepore & Ludwig (2005: 159)

¹²⁶ Davidson (1971)

the same sentence—the premise plainly fails to entail the conclusion. But is it possible that each occurrence instead refers to the same event of utterance? We sometimes refer to the same event in the same way. And multiple references to the same event are not hard to come by. Let's consider a non-linguistic event, such as a robin flying by my window now. I may refer to this event using the demonstrative "that," as in "That never happened before." Provided access to that reference, you too can refer to the same event by saying "That is lovely" (e.g.). In such contexts, the reference of "that" is fixed with respect to this event. In other contexts, any number of things will equally serve the same purpose. The point is that once a constant reference is established, my utterance of, say, the sentence "I saw that" entails "I saw that," as an utterance of "Nick saw that" also entails "Nick saw that." If Lois were in my position instead, "Lois saw that" would entail "Lois saw that." If the demonstrative referred to different things in each of their respective occurrences (say, a bird and a car), of course these entailments wouldn't obtain.

Turning to a linguistic event, suppose Lois utters the sentence "Superman is strong" in our presence. Having both heard her utterance, you turn to me and say "I heard that." Then I, in turn, respond "I heard that too." With both occurrences of "that" here referring to the same event, "I heard that" entails "I heard that." By the same token, you or I could also refer to Lois' utterance with "Lois said that." In either case, the reference of the demonstrative remains Lois' utterance of "Superman is strong," rather than yours or mine. With respect to Lois' utterance of that sentence, then,

(18) Lois said that.
Lois said that.

is a valid argument.¹²⁷

If (18) holds when "that" refers to Lois' utterance, might it likewise hold when referring to an utterance of mine? That is, instead of saying, "Lois said that," with the demonstrative pointing, as it were, to Lois' utterance, I say "Lois said that Superman is strong." If a paratactic account is correct, the reference of "that" here is not Lois' utterance but my own, with its logical form provided by (16). The first utterance in (16) is of the same sentence-type exemplified by (18). Assessing (18) with respect to this referential assignment appears to leave its validity untouched. Similarly, the content-sentence, possessing the ordinary semantic values of its parts, will uphold the validity of

(19) Superman is strong.
Superman is strong.

¹²⁷ Subject to a presumption that it instantiates a valid schema for 'stuttering inferences' involving the same demonstrative references relative to the same referential assignment.

Now if (18) and (19) are each valid, relative to their paratactic interpretation, might (17) follow? It would appear that (18) and (19) are themselves sub-arguments of (17). Recasting (17) in either of the following ways should make this clear.

(17') Lois said that.
Superman is strong.
Lois said that.
Superman is strong.

(17'') Lois said that.
Superman is strong.
Superman is strong.
Lois said that.

The availability of the second occurrence of "Lois said that" need not issue from another utterance of it. Rather, it should be seen as the result of the original sentence, relative to its context of utterance, entailing itself with respect to the very interpretation it receives there. From this standpoint, there appears to be no obstacle to regarding the occurrences of "that" in both sentences as fixed by a single episode of demonstrative reference to one and the same utterance.

6. Two Types of Truth Conditions

It appears, then, that the paratactic proposal remains intact and promising. Parataxis preserves the principle of 'semantic innocence' that reference does not shift between embedded and unembedded contexts, leading us to drop that aspect of Frege's theory of sense. And it eschews a notion of sense as some kind of abstract entity standing between a speaker and the external significance of her thought and talk. In this way, Davidson does justice to semantic innocence in the process of combining it to another principle that Barwise & Perry call the "Priority of external significance." This is a principle they define in opposition to conceptions of content that locate the semantic significance of an expression in a speaker's subjectivity, in such a way that removes it from the objective sphere of extra-mental reality.

But for all that, there remains an unanswered question that Davidson leaves looming, viz., when a reporter's content-sentence suffices to place him in an adequate relation of 'samesaying' with the content of the original utterance. Although Davidson's utterance of "The Earth moves" makes him a samesayer with Galileo, an utterance of "The planet seen in space by John Glenn moves" would not. Toward this end, I propose joining its principles to the non-reified notion of sense on offer. The overarching aim is to preserve the entailments licensed by the logical form of parataxis (as well as those entailments it does not permit), while also accounting for conditions of adequacy for samesaying in terms of this notion de re sense. However, such an attempted merger must confront Barwise & Perry's claim that preserving the principle of External Priority is incompatible with the inclusion of Fregean sense. This constitutes a major obstacle to my explanatory strategy of

joining parataxis to a notion of Fregean sense. The challenge is to show that fidelity to both principles need not, and should not, compel us to abandon the notion of sense altogether.

7. Barwise & Perry regard Frege's notion of *Bedeutung* as a mostly botched attempt to capture external significance, as the *Bedeutung* of an uttered sentence is its truth value, rather than what they suppose it should be—a concatenation of the objects and properties involved. As they conceive it, the error, on the one hand, is that the attempt to capture external significance in terms of *Bedeutung* fails because it loses all specificity with the subject matter of a thought; and, on the other, that the specificity captured by the *Sinn* of the sentence does not make sufficient contact with its objective subject matter to satisfy the principle of the Priority of External Significance. So while *Sinn* captures the specific structure of the thought, differentiating each true thought from any other and each false thought from any other, they suppose that a thought's directedness at external reality is lost.

To begin uncontentiously enough, it is helpful to recall a self-described 'platitude' from Strawson: "one who makes a statement or assertion makes a true statement or assertion if and only if things are as, in making that statement, he states them to be."¹²⁸ To assert that it is muggy today (e.g.), I need to find a sentence the utterance of which, in suitable contexts, could be used to assert something that is true iff it is muggy today.¹²⁹ In many contexts—especially, but not necessarily limited to, those dealing in modern English—if I assertorically utter the sentence "It's muggy today," what I say is true iff that aspect of the world is how I've asserted it to be, i.e., that it is muggy today. If I'm mistaken about the mugginess of today—if it's actually quite dry—what I say is false.

Is what I say when I assert "Hesperus is visible" the same as what I could say by asserting "Phosphorus is visible"? Analogously, is what I believe when I believe that Hesperus is visible the same thing as my belief that Phosphorus is visible? Whether the same or not, we can hold, in line with Strawson's platitude, that the thought that Hesperus is visible does not, in Wittgenstein's phrase, stop short of the fact that Hesperus is visible. What I think when I think truly that Hesperus is visible is nothing other than that Hesperus is visible—a thought which is correct iff the referent of "Hesperus" is visible. And when I think that Phosphorus is visible the content of my thought is that Phosphorus is visible—a thought which is correct iff the referent of "Phosphorus" is visible.

Now, we can appreciate how Barwise & Perry fail to take the measure of the notion of sense in light of the platitude from Wittgenstein and Strawson that what we think or speak, when we think or speak truly, just is what is the case. Schematically, what

¹²⁸ Strawson (1969: 180)

¹²⁹ This is not to suggest that the intention must be conceived as a causally prior event, itself giving rise to the subsequent expression of it utterance, at which the subject arrives by means of searching for it or reasoning to it.

one thinks is that things are thus-and-so; and when things are thus-and-so, what one thinks is what is the case—a perfectly ordinary conception of states of affairs that Barwise and Perry are after. At the same time what one thinks is a thought—the *Sinn* of a complete uttered sentence, composed out of the *Sinne* of its parts. The crucial point is that at the level of sense, with all the specificity of its structure, external significance is already secured. When Hannah thinks truly that Hesperus is visible the content of her thought is already lies in the objective sphere—that Hesperus is visible. As McDowell puts the point, “there is no ontological gap between the sort of thing one can mean, or generally the sort of thing one can think, and the sort of thing that can be the case.”¹³⁰ When a thinks truly that Hesperus is visible, what she thinks is what is the case—that Hesperus is visible. In entertaining this thought, she does so in virtue of a particular way of thinking about its subject-matter (that constitutive of thought and talk with a proper name) that is immediately directed at external reality.

Now to appreciate the standpoint I am recommending, consider what Tyler Burge treats as his first “thesis” about the nature of the *de re*. He writes, “*mental representation is always representation-as....Every purported application, reference, and attribution in every content position in all thought and perception is perspectival and is carried through in a perspectival way: its marked by some representational content, which constitutes a perspectival way of thinking or perceiving*”¹³¹

A subject entertaining a singular thought or utterance stands in no less direct a relation to its subject matter—whatever specific of segment of extra-mental reality that happens to be—by virtue of her occupying a perspective on it in virtue of which she thinks of it in one particular way or another. Burge’s insight is a way of capturing the fact that there is no thought of a neutral configuration of object and property, or no bare thought of an object, contrary to what many Millians risk overlooking, as Burge himself observes in this connection. All representation being representation-as does not detract from the external directedness of thought. Indeed, it brings out how a *de re* sense is already directed at its subject matter.

Let us recall Mach’s “That man is a shabby pedagogue” and “I am shabby pedagogue.” They predicate the same object of the same property relative to the same time and place. Prescinding from the potential difference made by “man”, and focusing on the content of the bare demonstrative alone, we have seen that instances of these two modes contribute distinct singular contents. One contributes an object known to himself as himself and the other contributes an object known as the occupant of a particular place in time. Again, this is not because they contribute properties in addition to its object to truth-conditions. Nor is it because their respective relations, or conception of them, differentiate content. Rather it is

¹³⁰ McDowell (1994:27). As I develop the point below, I also draw on the illuminating discussion in McDowell (2005).

¹³¹ Burge (2009: 249); emphasis in original

because there is no object to be contributed at all, except insofar as the object is known in one way or another. We can represent the content of each truth-conditionally, relativizing the axiom in a compositional truth-theory for a given demonstrative “that” to speaker, place, and time, and “I” to the particular individual wrt to their special standing to himself.¹³² Thus, “that” refers to that is only knowledge one could possess wrt speaker, time, and place.

How, then, is Mach’s thought that *that man is a shabby pedagogue* distinct from the thought that *I myself am a shabby pedagogue*, given that their *Bedeutungen* are the same at every level? The fact that the *Bedeutungen* is a self-conscious subject might affect the sense of both, but in different ways. In the “I” the subject matter is not simply a subject who happens to be self-conscious, but includes the self-conscious identification of oneself. What Mach thinks—the subject matter—is not merely himself, or a self-conscious subject that happens to be him. No: it is essential to the content of his thought that it includes the self-conscious identification. Again, what is known in any episode of self-identification is independent of any episode or another. But it is not independent of the possibility of any at all. No self-identification inheres in the demonstrative identification of a self-conscious subject who happens also to be that self-conscious subject. The content of the demonstrative identification does not include oneself*, as the content of the “I” does not include the content of any demonstrative identification. Self-identification is part of the subject matter and demonstrative identification not, on the one hand; and demonstrative identification but not self-identification, is the subject matter of the second. Their extensional equivalence does not entail that the contents are the same. The idea of a neutral configuration of object and property is an illusion, encouraged by the fact that both what we think and what we think about are independent of any acts or episodes of thinking; the fact that we can identify the same thing in different ways. When concerns are purely extensional, we are not dealing with a bare object. We cannot carry out an extensional task without employing one sense or another. The focus is not the total absence of sense, but the way that any range of senses serves the extensional aims just as well. In focusing on the *Bedeutung*, we do not encounter the bare object. We encounter it through some sense or another, which we can then treat according to its reference alone.

When he thinks truly, what he thinks is what is the case—that *that man is a shabby pedagogue*. The content of a true thought/thinkable is what is the case, a fact, or state of affairs. (Strawson, Wittgenstein). What we think about is the True. One knows the latter, when one knows that what one thinks is true. Similarly, when he thinks truly that *I am a shabby pedagogue* (even if disbelieves it), what he thinks is *that he himself* is a shabby pedagogue*. The *Bedeutungen* are the same on every level. The content is not. To say that the referent does not include the sense, is not to say that the object is thought about in no way at all—representation without any representation-as—a dubious notion Burge roundly rejects. It’s not that in dealing at the level of reference, we think about a bare object. We abstract from any

¹³² Burge (1974)

particular way of thinking in dealing solely at the level of reference. What matters for a theory of *Bedeutung* is not the involvement of senses in it. But this is not to say that when our concern is with the referent itself, not sense matters at all. It's that no particular sense matters more than any other. We still need it to identify the referent. And we do not suppose that we are dealing only with a bare object.

This neatly elicits their difference in truth-conditions, even as they involve the same predication of the same object, relative to the same place and time. It also reflects their difference in content. The demonstrative case consists of a demonstrative identification object, i.e. as an occupant of a particular time and place relative to the perceiver's own objective position. The first-person consists of an object known to himself through his unique standing, i.e. as an object that knows itself as itself. These are distinct pieces of knowledge, as are their corresponding relations different objective circumstances. Being an occupant of a particular time and place relative to a perceiver's own objective position is distinct as relation to the relation of being known to oneself as oneself. And as the constitutive relations determining reference and understanding differ, so does what is known in virtue of standing in those relations—the content is different. What is known, when an object is known as the occupant of a particular place and time relative to a perceiver, is different from what is known when an object knows himself as himself. It's not just that the relations are different. It's that what is known is different, in virtue of the difference in the relations.

This does not collapse the sense/reference distinction. These senses all alike wrt to the reference they share. To think (or speak) of an object in any of these ways is to think (or speak) about one and the same object. The difference is not in what is thought of but in what is thought. We do not think of the sense, or the word that expresses it, we think of the object it determines. But what we think, in thinking about it in virtue of one sense or another, is not the same. The object of a first-person and demonstrative reference could be the same—they are both about the same object. But what is thought about is different. The subject matter of Mach's two thoughts are different, even as their *Bedeutungen* is the same. The referent of "that man" and "I" are one. But what we think—the contents of our thoughts, are not the same. We don't think Obama; we think about Obama; and we think about Obama by name, demonstrative, description, first-person, etc. These are individually what we think when we think about him in one of these ways. What we think about is the reference, not the sense; but what we think is the sense not the reference. What we think is never the bare reference, even if we allow that what we think about—the *Bedeutungen*—is.

The reference of the whole sentence is its truth-value (as the extension is for many contemporary programs in semantics). To say that what we think about is the True or the False, need not amount to anything more than that. When what we think or say is true, what we think 'about' is the True, insofar as that truth-value is its *Bedeutung* or extension. When I think or speak truly what is expressible by "That cup is almost empty", what I think about is the True. Every true proposition is a way

of thinking of the True. But *what* we think—the content of our thought—is never the True (what would that look like?) To say that we can understand a proposition without knowing its truth-value, is just to say that we can know what we think without always knowing what we think about. The content of what we think is capturable by certain specifications of truth-conditions; what we think about, by a specification of a truth-value. As there is no bare thought of an object, there is no bare thought of a truth-value.

For the *Bedeutungen* to stay the same, it cannot contain the elements of its senses. The referent of “Obama” “I” “that man” are the same insofar as it does not include these ways of thinking. So the objectivity of sense is not the same as the objectivity of reference. Relative to a certain context, Mach is a perceptibly present individual occupying a particular place and time. This is so whether anyone exploits his perceptible presence in thinking of him in this way. And when one does, what one thinks about does not include these elements. But what one thinks does. There is no demonstrative content that is not constituted by knowing an object in this way. So both the sense and the reference are in the public domain. We think about the objective reference by thinking of it in an objectively available way. We no more think about sense as we think the reference. What we think about is an object, not our way of thinking of it. Conversely, what we think in thinking one way or another, is not what we think about. That what we think is never the bare reference chimes with the fact that what we think about is never the way of thinking. Mach’s “I” and “that man” are both about the same object. But what he thinks are different senses of that object.

8. There is a sense in which truth-conditions are the same—if we carve up content purely in terms of configurations of objects and properties, irrespective of the particular ways in which we think or talk about them. But if all thought about an object is thought of it in some way, then the singular thought expressible by a name could very well contribute differently to the content of its utterances. If whenever we think that things are thus and so, we cannot help but think of them in a one way or another—such that there’s no such thing as thinking of the object but not in any way at all—then what is present to the mind in true thought is a certain state of the world, conceived in one way or another. If this is correct, there is no neutral level of description whereby the world is presented in thought in no way at all. To be sure, the object of thought remains its objective, publically accessible subject matter, rather than the concepts or senses exercised in bringing these things into view. The point instead is that when we think of reality in certain direct ways, and what we think is true, the senses thus activated are also part of the objective sphere—not idiosyncratic or essentially private features of the agent’s subjectivity.

The approach to Frege’s puzzle proceeds in this way. Consider Mach’s discovery, “I am that man!” It is crucially important that he recognize that the object is the same. But this is not to conceive the object in abstraction from either. Rather, it is to conceive it at once as both. Compare: “I = I”, “that man = that man”, and “I am that man.” The content of the first is the knowledge of oneself as oneself*; the second, s/t

as s/t; the third, oneself* = s/t. These are separate semantic contents. When Mach makes this identity judgment, it is something other than the sum of what he had before: “that man is that man” and “I am I”. What is distinctive about it is that the object known in self-identification is the same as the object known in one’s demonstrative identification, and vice versa. Mach realizes that the occupant of s/t is himself*. Mach’s realization, “I am that man” is an informative identity-judgment Mach could make that was at once objectual without being descriptive. He now knows that object he knows demonstratively is the same as the object he knows first-personally. The contribution to content made by either singular term in the identity is the same in any first-order predication: non-descriptive and object-dependent. Similarly in simultaneously accepting and not accepting “That man is a shabby pedagogue” and “I am a shabby pedagogue” the respective contents of each differ.

On the same general grounds as Mach’s first-person and demonstrative reference, a subject could understand “Hesperus is Phosphorus” and still wonder whether it’s true, because understanding is singular but distinct. And one can simultaneously take rationally conflicting attitudes because of the difference the sense of one makes to the thought expressible by it. In simultaneously believing and disbelieving “Hesperus is visible” and “Phosphorus is visible” the contents differ according to different nominal identifications.

In entertaining or asserting an identity-judgment like “Hesperus is Phosphorus”, we are not entertaining or asserting identity between two senses—obviously the ways of thinking are different. We predicate identity of the referent, not the sense. “Hesperus is F” predicates F of the referent of “H”—it does not predicate F of the word “Hesperus” or the sense it expresses. We do not predicate the sense of “Hesperus” in thinking about Hesperus by that name. And we only predicate F of the referent of “Hesperus”, insofar as we can identify it as such. So “Hesperus is Hesperus” predicates identity of the referent of “Hesperus”—not the sense or the word. But the possibility of that predication depends on “Hesperus” having the sense it does. Without a sense there is no object to predicate. And without the object, there is no sense. The existence of an object precedes some senses, but not all. Given the existence of an object, it has some principle of identity. And any thought of it is thought in way or another. The content of “Hesperus is Hesperus” is different from the content of “Hesperus is Phosphorus” in virtue of different ways of thinking of the same concrete object. What it is in virtue of which I think about something as visible, when I think that Hesperus is visible, is not the same as what it is in virtue of which I think of something as visible, when I think that Phosphorus is visible. As thinking about something demonstratively or first-personally is not thinking the same thought as descriptively, so can names diverge from others and from each other.

Once we step outside the perimeter of a Russellian Proposition, we can appreciate how natural and informative identity judgments can be, without slipping back into descriptivism. “Gausanker is Everest” “John Miller is Donald Trump” “I am Nick”

"She is Candace" "This is Eloise". These are and essentially *de re*. The information that is invoked in understanding one and the separate set of the other are both activated in the process of identifying each other. If I assert that Gaurisanker is not Mt. Everest by uttering the sentence that I use here to specify its content, I'm not (merely) asserting the triviality that this object is itself. I already knew that Gaurisanker is itself and the same for Everest. That is to say, I know Gaurisanker as "Gaurisanker" and Everest as "Everest." I already knew that the concept *identical to Gaurisker* and the concept *identical to Everest* were each instantiated by the reference of "Gaurisanker" and "Everest," respectively. I now know that the converse is true too. So I must have learned that they are one and the same thing. But the details of how I learned it, while necessarily informing my assertion, need not itself always be part of its subject matter. Having learned that they're the same thing might occasion merging my dossiers. But that's a consequence of my coming to know the identity. Still, thinking about Everest was different from thinking about Gaurisanker, insofar as what is known is different. In being unmediated, the identification is not separate from the predication of identity. They are each aspects of a joint exercise of distinct conceptual capacities in a single unmediated act of judgment. Neither one is more fundamental than the other in entertaining the thought. Overemphasis on the formal structure of identity-statements might mislead us from its essentially empirical content.

The path forward comes from the incorporation of the notion of *de re* sense on offer. Not reified, it is not an abstract object of thought. Rather, it is a way of thinking about the subject matter of thought and talk, construed as an appropriate answer to Evan's question of what it is in virtue of which a subject thinks about what she does in so thinking about it, as I have developed this notion of *de re* sense. As we have seen, this is a conception of content that is essentially *de re*—object-dependent and unmediated. The upshot is that semantic innocence is preserved, as sense and reference remain constant irrespective of their embeddings; the object of thought—if we continue to talk that way—is nothing but its subject matter in the public domain; and we nevertheless can treat the difference between two thoughts alike only in predicating the same object of the same property, in terms of the distinct aspects of their subject matter captured by their distinct singular senses. We thus accommodate Barwise & Perry's principle of External Priority without abandoning the operative notion of singular sense.

9. Frege's Puzzle

Turning now to the inferential structure characteristic of Frege cases shows it to support the logical form that parataxis would predict, namely, of blocking the substitution failures before they could even begin. And it does so by eliciting the distinct senses active in each case.

Identity-Sentences. Frege asks how one can know enough to understand "Hesperus = Phosphorus" without knowing, already, that it is true. I approach an answer to this question through another. When does knowing the truth of an identity sentence

constitute an increase in knowledge? One kind of way an identity-sentence can express new knowledge is when it derives from the discovery of an object whose existence had been hitherto in doubt. Not yet knowing the truth of “Neptune exists,” we do not thereby know the truth of “Neptune is Neptune,” as the truth of the latter presupposes that of the former. Coming to know that Neptune exists is coming to know that “_ = Neptune” is instantiated. Given the existence of Neptune, “Neptune = Neptune” is trivial, as ‘there is no entity without identity’¹³³ and the use of “Neptune” in the identity, like any other ordinary occurrence, already presupposes “Neptune exists.” The statement of identity and the statement of existence are distinct, to the extent that one is first-order and the other second-order. But they nonetheless come together as a package deal, as it were, each inextricably bound up with the other.

For knowing that Neptune exists is knowing that the property of being Neptune, or being identical to Neptune, is instantiated. So knowledge of existence is knowing that “_ = Neptune” is instantiated. The statement of existence is not itself a statement of identity, but it presupposes the truth of one. Which one? –The object we know when we come to know that Neptune exists, viz. Neptune: the only thing that could count as a correct answer to the question about what are conception is answerable to. So now we know that Neptune is identical to Neptune. We know a correct answer to the question, ‘What satisfies “_ = Neptune” which we did not know prior to knowledge of existence. That is, we now know the truth of “Neptune is Neptune” where we did not before, and that is how understanding this sentence can add to our knowledge, informing us of this truth. What it adds to our knowledge of the truth of “Neptune exists” is a specification of the known object. Whereas “Neptune exists” says that the property of being Neptune is instantiated, as a second-order statement it does not strictly specify the object. It uses “Neptune” as part of the predicate expressing the property of being Neptune, not referring to it. So we come to possess two pieces of knowledge that are inextricably bound up with each other.

The identity statement registers our increase in knowledge by specifying the object, whose existence is presupposed by the truth of the identity-statement. That is why, typically, statements like “Neptune is Neptune” are uninformative; it states a trivial presupposition which is common ground to any competent user of “Neptune,” viz. “Neptune exists.” Still, we should not let the air of triviality distract us from what remains its essentially empirical content. Given Neptune, “Neptune is Neptune” is trivial. But we are not given Neptune a priori, we do not derive its existence through logic, but through empirical investigation. In short,, “Neptune is Neptune” is informative insofar as it constitutes an increase in knowledge when the existence of Neptune is in doubt. In coming to know “Neptune exists” we come to know the truth of “Neptune is Neptune” too, as it presupposes knowledge of “Neptune exists.” The content of the existence statement is the knowledge that “_ is Neptune” is instantiated. What constitutes the content of an identity statement depends on the content of the term that could correctly complete the first-order predication. What

¹³³ Quine (1948)

term 't' is could that be? The term which expresses our knowledge of the object, viz. "Neptune."

The discovery that Hesperus is Phosphorus is different from the discovery of Neptune, in that the existence of either member of this first pair is not at issue while the existence of the other is at the fore. The discovery of Neptune gave us knowledge of the truths expressed by "Neptune exists" and "Neptune is Neptune." This increase in information becomes common ground moving forward, as "Neptune exists" becomes presupposed. But the uses of "Hesperus" already presuppose "Hesperus exists" as the uses of "Phosphorus" presuppose "Phosphorus exists. This accounts for the triviality and uninformativeness of both "Hesperus is Hesperus" and "Phosphorus is Phosphorus." What makes "Hesperus is Phosphorus" informative is that its truth is not trivial in this way; it is not knowable based on the presuppositions of both "Hesperus" and "Phosphorus" individually or together. The presuppositions of existence diverge, as their past inferential patterns attest to. Knowing that Hesperus exists and knowing that Phosphorus exists are distinct, neither one entailing the other. By the same token, what we know when we know that "= Hesperus" is instantiated is not what we know when we know "= Phosphorus" is instantiated.

When we first come to know just one, our knowledge of its concomitant identity-statement is that Hesperus is Hesperus, not that Hesperus is Phosphorus. What makes "Hesperus is Phosphorus" informative is that we do not presuppose that "Hesperus" satisfies "= Phosphorus" as we do not presuppose that "Phosphorus" satisfies "_ = Hesperus." This is the key to understanding how identity-statements can constitute 'proper knowledge'. Pre-discovery, there is no valid inference from "Hesperus is Hesperus" to "Phosphorus is Phosphorus," as indeed there is no valid inference from one to the other in any other sentence. The only way to know the truth of "Hesperus is Phosphorus" is empirical, as there is no valid entailment from the logic and semantics of these two terms to this identity-sentence. That is why it expresses proper knowledge. The increase in objectual knowledge is this: the object we know to be identical to Hesperus is the object we know to be identical to Phosphorus.

Prior to the discovery, we knew that the object we know to be identical to Hesperus is the object we know to be identical to Hesperus and the object we know to be identical to Phosphorus is the object we know to be identical to Phosphorus. During this duration, we could correctly complete "_ = Hesperus" with "Hesperus" and likewise "Phosphorus" for "_ = Phosphorus", but neither one for the other as that would require us to know that "Hesperus exists" and "Phosphorus exists" are true in virtue of the same object. The fact that they can post-discovery is a result of our increase in knowledge. The potential informativeness of "Hesperus is Phosphorus" comes from learning the presupposition that prevents us from immediately recognizing the truth of this, simply in understanding it, as we can with the other two. What underpins the immediacy there is the same as what underpins its uninformativeness: knowing the existence presupposition in each case. As

knowing “Neptune exists” afforded them knowledge of “Neptune is Neptune”, knowing that “Hesperus exists” and “Phosphorus exists” is true in virtue of the same object, affords them knowledge of “Hesperus is Phosphorus.” As “Neptune = Neptune” informed on the basis of “Neptune exists”, “Hesperus = Phosphorus” informs on the basis of knowing both existence-statements are satisfied by the same object. The increase in knowledge comes from the realization that “Hesperus exists” and “Phosphorus exists” are each true in virtue of the same object. In short, identity statements are uninformative when its existence presuppositions are all known; informative in becoming known.

10. *Belief-Sentences.* Now let us turn to the substitution failure between “Hannah believes that Hesperus is visible” and “Hannah believes that Phosphorus is visible.” In my view, we can see what goes wrong here without even going so far as the belief-sentences, because the substitution failure is already active with their complement clauses alone. What I am claiming is that with respect to the relevant inferential context¹³⁴ inferences between sentences involving one name or the other are impermissible at the outset.

The validity of an inference depends on the validity of the inference schema it instantiates¹³⁵ And the inferential power of a singular term, such as a proper name, depends on its referential assignment. Its range of inference is continuous with the range of its referential assignment, which is not the same as the range of its reference relative to any referential assignment, as we shall see. The inferential potential of “Hesperus” issues from the referential assignment it receives as what is known to the producers of its proprietary practice as “Hesperus.” As we have seen, a proper name-using practice is anchored by this piece of knowledge, which certifies the subsequent swirl of activity and information involving the name as what is licensed by its referential assignment. We identify a proper name by its practice and the network of information (rationally grounded in the knowledge of reference that is its organizing principle. This constrains the scope of presuppositions (“Hesperus exists” vs. “Phosphorus exists”) conditions for competent participation, the shared commitment to participate in the same practice, and rational relations among the networks of information that fall within the scope of its inferential proprietaries.

Consider the following argument. “Obama is the U.S. President. Obama lives in the White House. Therefore, there is something that is both the U.S. President and lives in the White House.” The validity of this turns on its instantiation of a schema like “ $F(t_1); G(t_1)/(\exists x) Fx \ \& \ Gx$.” The “Obama”-argument instantiates this valid schema, to the extent that “Obama” has a referential assignment—and the same referential assignment in both occurrences. For the inferential power of either occurrence of “Obama” requires relativization to some referential assignment or another, and the

¹³⁴ I borrow this expression from Belnap (1990) who uses it, as I do, as a terminological variant on Brandom’s (1994) “inferential proprietaries.”

¹³⁵ For a superb account of the grounds for the schematic conception of logical validity, see Goldfarb (2010).

validity of the argument as a whole requires that each occurrence be relativized to the same assignment, or a stipulation that two separate assignments be treated the same. If the reference of the first “Obama” were Barack, and the second Michele, say, then the argument would be just as invalid as the one formed using “Barack” and “Michelle” instead. It would not correspond to the valid schema, and would not gain support from one such as $F(t_1); G(t_2)/(\exists x) Fx \ \& \ Gx$, which is invalid pending addition of further stipulation to the effect of $t_1 = t_2$. So inferences involving each occurrence of “Obama” are only intersubstitutable relative to recognition of the same referential assignment. By the same token, it is just as invalid to infer “Hesperus is F” from “Phosphorus is F,” or vice versa, as it is to infer “Jupiter is F” from “Saturn is F.” A valid transition from one to the other requires the addition of “Hesperus = Phosphorus” or “Jupiter = Saturn, relative to the permissible domain of inference.

When Millians hold that a given instance of “Hesperus is F” entails “Phosphorus is F,” they presume an inferential context where these either share a referential assignment, or, though separate, contain a clause tying the two together. For if “Phosphorus is F” is a valid entailment of a given use of “Hesperus is F,” it is so by instantiating a relevant valid schema. What would that be? It would not be $F(t_1)/G(t_2)$, which is invalid. It must instead be $F(t_1); t_1 = t_2 /G(t_2)$. So entailments between sentences involving one or the other require the addition of “Hesperus = Phosphorus.” If this is not licensed by the respective referential assignments for each name, it must be introduced into the inferential context on extra-logical grounds, like an astronomical discovery. But as the practice stood pre-discovery, there was no support from either source: no entailment of an identity clause from the referential assignments of the two names, and no independent empirical knowledge of co-reference either. Consequently, there is no justifiable transition from one to the other. The members of this linguistic community simply lack the entitlement to make such inferences, just as much as we would to substitute “Jupiter” for “Saturn” in our talk now because astrophysicists in the future find out they were really the same planet all along.¹³⁶ The modern Millian errs by imposing future knowledge on past patterns of inference in which it was simply not available.

The modern Millian foists entailments from “Hesperus” to “Phosphorus” into inferential contexts where they could not be valid. He does this by an instantiation of the valid schema containing the identity clause, relative to his own context of assessment¹³⁷, and imposes the entailment into a past inferential context where that schema was not, and could not, have been validly operative. He thus inserts an entailment that the original reasoners could not have reached through no fault of their own reasoning powers, but through their lack, at that point in time, of extra empirical pieces of information that would allowed for the inference. The only sense in which the Millian could maintain the retrospective assignment of a sentence-in-

¹³⁶ Here I am guided by the insight of Wilson (1982) cautioning against projecting future developments in the use of an expression onto patterns of past use.

¹³⁷ MacFarlane (2003: 322)

context (Kaplan) derived relative to his context of evaluation is one where it could it is so derived according to the presumption that their propositional contents, being Millian, are the same. Then, even though they were not entitled to infer one from the other, nor incur the obligations attending acting on one purely by virtue of acting on the other, they were nonetheless unwittingly working with the same semantic content.

This has direct implications for the status of the ‘semantic’ version of the de re/de dicto distinction, according to which ‘unrestricted exportation’¹³⁸ holds for any pair of reports involving co-referring singular terms, because the content of both beliefs are regarded as the same.¹³⁹ Imagine that in 1962 Sonny Liston says, “Ali is a chump” expressing a belief whose content is specifiable by the use of this sentence in a suitable context. The modern Millian treats “Liston believes that Clay is a chump” as equivalent to “Liston believes that Ali is a chump”—as they take the mere configuration of object and property to be all there is to the constitution of content. And indeed for many practical purposes of reporting using either one can suffice, as they are alike in the ‘syntactic’ sense of the de re/de dicto distinction. We can say either “Clay is such that Liston believes of him that he is a chump” or “Ali is such that Liston believes of him that he is a chump” with the singular terms outside the scope of the complement clause of each binding the variable within.

But we should not yet conclude that these contents are the same. In the context of use, Liston’s “Clay is a chump” does not entail “Ali is a chump.” As “Ali” had no referential assignment at all relative to the place and time that constitutes this context it was more than rationally inert; it was wholly absent. The modern Millian seeks to justify its inclusion from a future inferential context where “Ali” does have a relevant reference. Is the mere fact that the reference “Clay” had then the same as “Ali” had later sufficient for sameness of content?¹⁴⁰

11. At this point, it should be clear how the notion of de re sense combines with the inferential structures characteristic of Frege’s puzzles in a way which recommends we resist this conclusion. What I have urged throughout is that the potential for comprehensive differences between the rational powers constitutive of competence with two co-referring terms suggests that a shared reference might not always be sufficient for shared content. From the beginning, two terms like “Hesperus” and “Phosphorus” differ in the knowledge that brings each referential relation into being, in the subsequent activity and networks of information built up around it, creating separate sets of semantic presuppositions and conditions of competence, possibilities for the preservation of reference, channels of information, permissible inferences, normativity of actions, and so on. Further, all of this can

¹³⁸ Quine (1956)

¹³⁹ Kaplan (1986); Salmon (1992, 1997)

¹⁴⁰ Waiving metaphysical questions about the continuity of identity over time, but harmlessly so, as this is an issue for all objects whether they change names or not.

change with a discovery of co-reference. As these comprehensive differences inhere in all these fundamental aspects of cognition and communication involving each respective name, they reflect a conception of content cut more finely than co-reference. They suggest a perspective on an object essentially tied to its reference, but not exhausted by the object alone. Rather, it allows for distinct perspectives for distinct referential relations. Kripke is right: the semantic significance of a name is exhausted by standing for its bearer. But the relation that “Hesperus” stands to its bearer need not be the same as the relation that “Phosphorus” stands to its bearer. And this is borne out at each dimension of the rational powers—informational, explicational, inferential, and behavioral—constitutive of competence with each. The upshot is that the semantic perspective occupied by subjects in possession of one is different from that for the other. And with the notion of *de re* sense I have adopted from Evans and McDowell, we can maintain the essential connection to reference, while countenancing a difference in content that is not at all descriptive or mediated. This allows us to do justice to the different points of view involved in thinking of Ali or thinking of Clay, evident in their sweeping differences in rational power.

12. Kripke’s Puzzle

Bearing this in mind, let us turn now to Kripke’s puzzle about “Paderewski.”¹⁴¹ Paderewski was a Polish politician and pianist. In the contexts of the practice where this individual is known as such, Peter learns the name. His mistake, however, lies in his supposition that the politician he knows as “Paderewski” is not the same man as he who Peter knows to be a pianist. Peter is thereby led to simultaneously endorse and reject utterances of the sentence “Paderewski is a pianist”, in e.g. his asserting “Paderewski is a pianist, but Paderewski is not a pianist.” This simultaneous act of endorsement and rejection could be taken as expressive of Peter’s corresponding attitudes, like belief and disbelief—assuming we adopt Kripke’s disquotation principle, allowing for the sincere, competent assertion of a declarative sentence to indicate the expressed belief to that effect. Kripke’s question, then, is what Peter believes by means of the conflicting stances he appears to assume.

To begin with, we know Peter mistakenly believes that each occurrence of “Paderewski” refers to two separate individuals. Consequently, his behavior can be seen to parallel the situation of a speaker who treats two given uses of “Obama” as names for Barack and Michelle, respectively, or a speaker who treats two given uses of “Ali” as names for Muhammad and Laila, respectively. My suggestion is that we approach Peter’s standing according to this model, with Peter regarding each kind of use as if it were a distinct but homonymous name.

However, they are in fact co-referring. But we can develop the analogy to find a solution. Suppose there are distinct practices for each use of “Paderewski” by the standards we have been considering. Then, even though they co-refer, the names

¹⁴¹ Kripke (1979)

are distinct according to the autonomy of the practices: the information from one is effectively isolated from the other, so that the information tied to reference and understanding in each case is functionally segregated. In that case, the difference in sense turns on the difference in the range of information controlled by knowledge of reference in each case. In this way too we can account for Paderewski.

But as Kripke describes it, we are led to suppose that the divergence is due to an accidental feature of the speaker's idiolect, rather than features constitutive of competence with both as effectively autonomous practices. I.e. it is an error arising from a quirk of the speaker's idiolect, rather than the semantic properties conferred by distinct practices or linguistic communities. This might suggest a solution based on imperfect understanding. But since this alleged imperfection need not undermine the use of either on their own, we should not rush to attribute imperfect understanding. Even taken together, it is not obvious that his competence is in question, as he exercises the same capacities for understanding each occurrence together here as he does when they occur apart.

The general principle is that of the individuation of a proper name according to the identity of practice its practice centers on the proprietary networks of information and the intentional patterns of activity informed by the knowledge which brings the particular proper name into being. On such grounds, we distinguish pairs of non-homonymous co-referring terms like "Hesperus" and "Phosphorus" as well as pairs of homonymous terms for distinct referents like "Obama"/ "Obama." In each case, we advert to the autonomous networks of information and their accompanying intentional patterns driven by the distinct piece of knowledge tied to the reference and understanding of each name.

Now, this suggests the possibility of doing the same for a homonymous name for the same individual separated by autonomous networks of information. Imagine two sets of producers each of whom knows an individual as "NN" but in the context of two rationally regimented practices. That is, they build up distinct bodies of information around the name, neither of which would be immediately recognizable to the other. E.g., imagine a group of childhood peers of Gödel, all of whom are acquainted with young Gödel by name, but none of whom know the mature Gödel as the brilliant logician he is. Conditions for participation in one practice, then, might not themselves permit participation in the other, as the individual is known in such a way that the networks of information generated by the earlier practice are effectively unrelated from the later. Mastery of one could leave one clueless in the face of the other, as there are no effective rational relations affording a bridge between them. Even producers in both practices could remain in this state, maintaining their memories of the young Gödel, but effectively separating them from their knowledge of the mature Gödel. In this case, what began as a single practice splinters off into two autonomous practices, or two segments of a single practice that are effectively autonomous on the same grounds. This would open the possibility of distinct senses for "Gödel" particular to each region of use, on the grounds that their systematic divergence in rational powers reflects what has

become two distinct ways of knowing an individual who happens to be the same and by the same sign or vocable.

This is the model we use then for “Paderewski.” While the networks of information need not be separated by two distinct communities, they are separated by the systematic segregation of information in one from the other, as if they were distinct practices. As members of such practices could understand something different in each case, so too could Peter with respect to the systematic divergence in his idiolect. We can treat the relative autonomy of information in a speaker’s idiolect as a limiting case for an autonomous practice, or segment of one. Resolution lies in the analogy.

The autonomy stems from the systematic segregation of information tied to understanding the occurrence of each one. Peter acts as if they pertain to distinct practices, as the network of information in each range of uses for “Paderewski” is systematically separated. A major component of this is that inclusion of information in one of Peter’s “Paderewski”-files will be effectively separate from the other. So what get included in one itself provides no reason for inclusion in the other. This fact will extend into what counts as common ground for Peter in discourses involving each range of use, according to the way he stays systematically sensitive to the presence of information in one set of circumstances and the other.

When Peter simultaneously endorses and rejects a pair of utterances involving the sentence “Paderewski is a pianist,” the contribution made by each use of “Paderewski” differs in content. What accounts for the cognitive difference are distinct rational relations by which he stands to the shared referent. On these grounds, his understanding of each kind of occurrence is tied to two effectively isolated bodies of information anchoring the reference of a given use of each.

The upshot is that Peter does believe that Paderewski₁ is a pianist as he disbelieves that Paderewski₂ is a pianist. The subscripts here serve the same role as phonetically or orthographically distinct but co-referring names like “Hesperus” and “Phosphorus” do. The fundamental underlying principle of individuation is the same in both cases. The sameness of the sign need not affect that.

Now we can still support the constancy of Peter’s competence across uses, on several kinds of grounds. When the information in a context of use activates one or the other “Paderewski”-file, that need not undermine competence, insofar as each serves the fundamental needs of communication in mutual understanding and transfer of information. Second, each information network of information is capable of supporting the same reference in either occurrence, as they both derive from the practice. That he would not see them that way, as he mistakenly regiments them into distinct idiolectic networks does not change the fact that the information he draws on in each case supports the community-wide reference. So both types of uses could preserve reference otherwise tied to the same single piece of knowledge of reference, even though Peter is incapable of seeing it that way.

Whereas understanding the name in the community is tied to single piece of knowledge—"Paderewski" stands for Paderewski—each of Peter's range of uses "Paderewski₁" and "Paderewski₂" would be tied to corresponding axioms: "Paderewski₁" stands for "Paderewski₂", on the one hand, and "Paderewski₂" stands for "Paderewski₁", on the other. Now as each use supports what is only known in the community in the one way, there is no need to question his competence. We can assess the status of Peter's two reference clauses in relation to the single one of the community, in two ways. Insofar as Peter's understanding impedes what would otherwise have permitted the transfer of information and mutual understanding, his competence becomes questionable. To that extent, we can treat his overall competence as imperfect, corresponding to each axiom approximating most of what the one does but not all. Thus he would have partial understanding reflecting in the imperfections of each of his clauses as they stand to single communal one. That is, they would constitute a slight deviation from what it captures, but remain effectively equivalent except in certain circumstances involving the two together. His understanding would be imperfect to that extent.

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Education and Academic Positions

University of Pittsburgh, 2000-2004
B.A. *Summa cum Laude*, with honors in philosophy

Visiting Student, Columbia University, 2003

Johns Hopkins University, 2005-
Qualifying exam in Philosophy of Language, 2007
M.A. in philosophy, 2007
Third-year Paper, "Rationality and Reference" 2008
Dissertation: *Acts of Reference*; defense date: April 6, 2017

Visiting Scholar, University of Pittsburgh, Spring 2015

Graduate Courses:

Philosophy of Language (Deflationism)
Descartes, Spinoza, Hobbes
Contemporary Moral Philosophy (Kantian Ethics)
Theory of Knowledge
Topics in Hegel's Philosophy (Elements of the Philosophy of Right)
Philosophy of Language (Conceptual Schemes)
Intermediate Symbolic Logic (Metatheory)
Philosophy and Cognitive Science (Massive Modularity)
Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit I
Philosophy of Language (Philosophy of Linguistics)
Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit II
Philosophy of Language (Frege)
Plato & his Predecessors

Areas of Specialization

Philosophy of Mind, Language, and Action

Areas of Competence

Epistemology, Logic, Ethics

Awards and Fellowships

Brackenridge Research Fellowship, Honors College, University of Pittsburgh, 2002
Research: Theories of Meaning
Advisor: Prof. John McDowell

Carol Kay Prize for the best undergraduate essay on British Literature between 1500-1900, English Department, University of Pittsburgh, 2002, 2005 (First Prize)

Brackenridge Research Fellowship, Honors College, University of Pittsburgh, 2003
Research: The Western Body/Soul Tradition
Advisor: Prof. Michael West

Chancellor's Undergraduate Teaching Fellowship, University of Pittsburgh, 2003

J.K. and Gertrude Miller Award for the best undergraduate essays on: Medieval or 20th century British literature Commonwealth or Global literature in English World literature in English translation Literary or cultural theory, English Department, University of Pittsburgh, 2003 (First Prize)

James Snead Memorial Essay Contest for the best undergraduate essays on: Film, African-American Literature, German Literature, American Literature, English Department, University of Pittsburgh, 2003 (First Prize)

Graduate Student Fellowship, Johns Hopkins University, 2005- 2010

Owen Fellowship, Johns Hopkins University, 2005-2007

Summer Research Stipend, Johns Hopkins University, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012

Dean's Teaching Fellowship, Johns Hopkins University, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014

Lovejoy Fellowship, Johns Hopkins University, Spring 2015

High Table teaching selection

Conference Presentations

“The Attack on the Reader in Donne’s “The Extasie””

Annual Conference of the West Virginia Shakespeare and Renaissance Society, Davis and Elkins College, 2003

Reply to Evgenia Mylonaki’s “The Main Dichotomy in Contemporary Action Theory,”
Inside/Outside Conference, Humanities Center, Johns Hopkins University, 2009

“A Critique of Direct Reference”

Pittsburgh Area Philosophy Colloquium, Washington & Jefferson College, 2014

Languages

German, Latin (reading knowledge)

Teaching

Teaching Assistant:

The Roaring Twenties (Pitt, Fall 2003)

Bioethics (JHU, Fall 2007; Fall 2010; Fall 2011)

Philosophy and Cognitive Science (JHU, Spring 2008)

Philosophical Classics (JHU, Fall 2008)

Symbolic Logic (JHU, Spring 2009; Spring 2013)

Philosophy of Mind (JHU, Fall 2009)

Addiction, Depression, and the Self (JHU, Spring 2010)

Philosophy of Religion (JHU, Spring 2011)

Sole Instructor:

Luck (JHU, Winter 2010)

Idolatry, God, and Life after Death (JHU, Winter 2011)